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No. 1230
20 February –
5 March 2009
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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T REALISE WE FLY TO LONDON

KONG. WHY WOULD WE?

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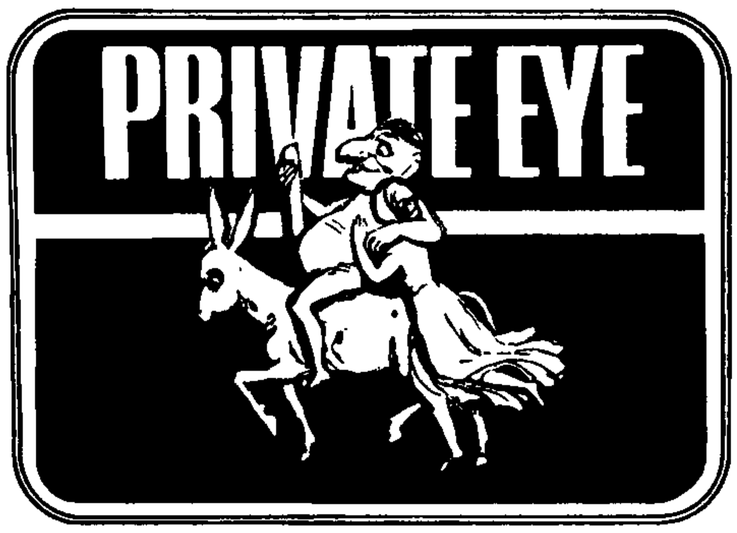
Is it just a Kiwi thing?



Insolvent abuse

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NUMBER CRUNCHING

4.3% Rise in sales of Mini last year as recession forces consumers to switch to smaller cars

19% Workers making Minis at BMW's Cowley plant who are being laid off anyway

DECLINE AND McFALL

THE Treasury select committee may have taken the bankers to task for wrecking the economy, but will anyone ever question its own record as the crisis was brewing?

Under John McFall, chairman since 2001, the committee has consistently failed to question the two main weaknesses that have so exacerbated current economic woes: excessive debt and lax regulation (apart from the occasional squeak of stable doors closing once horses like Equitable Life had bolted). In 2002 McFall, debating business in Scotland, even opined: "We need to exercise a light regulatory touch while fostering economic progress."

Discussing the bankers' performance on *Newsnight* last week, McFall – an ally of Gordon Brown – again happily lashed out at the City suits but resolutely refused to admit that the government owed any apology of its own. Two days later, given the chance to nail Brown on his role in causing the crisis when the PM appeared before the chairmen of select committees, McFall merely handed his chum the chance to excoriate the bankers once more. Tough one, that.

Convention has it that the parliamentary public accounts committee responsible for monitoring government spending is chaired by an opposition MP for fear that one from the government party would go soft. Time perhaps for a bit more independence on the treasury committee too...

The Curse of Gnome 1

"Glen Moreno... also happens to be a trustee of both Prince Alois of Liechtenstein and of the prince's Liechtenstein Global Trust, a private banking empire which exists to promote, ahem, tax-dodging using the alpine principality's notorious secrecy."

– *Private Eye*, 20 January

'Brown's bank boss had links to tax cheats'

– Front page lead, *Sunday Times*, 8 February

Moreno steps down as acting chairman of UK Financial Investments

– 12 February

● **Full story**, *p6*

The Curse of Gnome 2

THE Tories crowed loudly at the departure of ex-HBOS chief executive Sir James Crosby as deputy chairman of the Financial Services Authority. But they could have spotted his unsuitability much earlier if they'd read *Private Eye*.

Shadow chancellor George Osborne's outrage over Crosby came a mere four months after *Eye* 1221 questioned his position as a top regulator. As we wrote in October: "Although he [Crosby] escaped before the proverbial hit the fan last month, for five years until July 2006 Sir James was chief executive of HBOS as it pursued its over-leveraged business model and increasingly turned a traditional deposit taker into a corporate finance specialist, the strategy that now sees it on its knees."

Nor can chancellor turned prime minister Gordon Brown say he wasn't warned when he gave Crosby various advisory roles over the years. Crosby led HBOS as it defended what the European court labelled an "abusive tax practice" (*Eye* 1154) and as it was fined £1.25m for lax anti-money laundering procedures (*Eye* 1163) a couple of years before he became Gordon's "identity management" adviser.

AND ONE IN THE EYE!

WHEN the Cabinet Office last week published details of junkets enjoyed by our most senior civil servants ("High Life for Sir Humphrey" ran the *Mail* front page), it claimed that "the decision to publish this list reflects the government's continued commitment to openness and transparency".

This was, er, bollocks. The junkets only emerged following a two-and-a-half-year campaign by *Private Eye*, hassling every Whitehall department for registers of hospitality for the three years up to 2006/07. Far from being open about these, the Cabinet Office orchestrated a cover-up under which all departments would say the older information would be too costly to obtain and that details for 2007 would be published in the "new year". That was supposed to be new year 2008, by the way.

Thirteen months later, with the *Eye's* complaints against the Cabinet Office's refusal to release details of most of its own junkets and the cover-up under consideration by the Information Commissioner, out came the belated 2007 details.

In the meantime the *Eye* has successfully contested refusals from departments including the Treasury, Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), HM Revenue & Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Foreign Office – in the process exposing the schmoozing of mandarins as they drew up crucial government policies and awarded lucrative contracts. Top Whitehall junketer Sir Brian Bender of BERR was unveiled in *Eye* 1220; while the man taking most freebies from companies to which he was awarding business was revealed as Steve Lamey of HMRC in *Eye* 1224.

Public knowledge of this disturbing pattern across Whitehall is **not** an example of open government but of prised-open, kicking-and-screaming government.

WHEN publicly owned development fund CDC (mission: alleviating poverty) celebrated its 60th anniversary in November, the postwar austerity in which it was born was a distant memory.

Some 250 guests, including CDC staff and partners, enjoyed a sumptuous party: total cost £54,893, or £220 a head.

CDC's PR agency Quiller tried to exploit the event to schmooze a few movers and shakers after the *Eye*'s exposure of CDC's transformation into a money-making machine. But only four MPs turned up, including man of the moment and freeloader *par excellence*... Derek Conway!

● *Killer stats, In the Back, p30*

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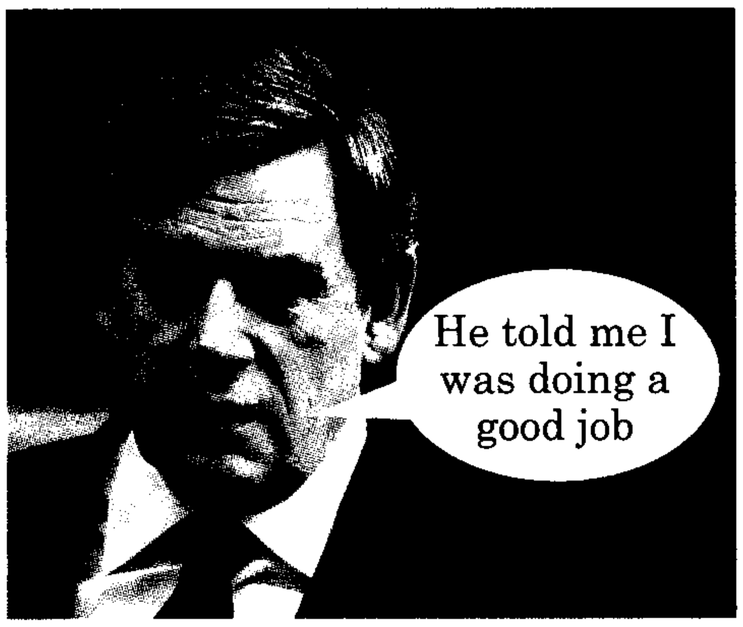
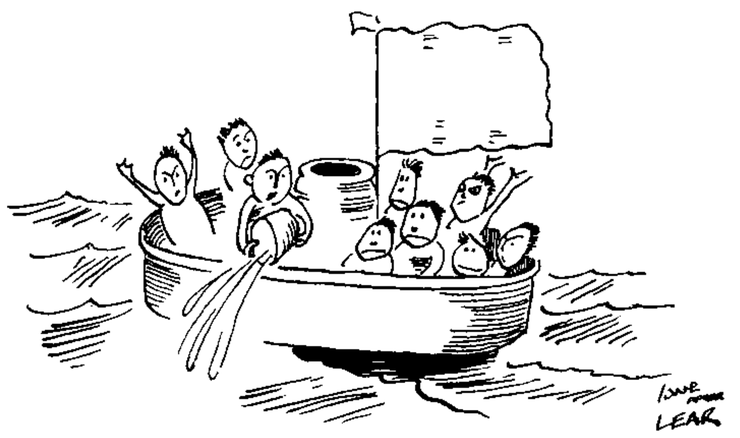
ABC

BROWN SACKS ADVISER





"My fellow Jumblies – do not be alarmed, I have every confidence this bale-out will save us!

The Curse of Gnome

NO SOONER had the *Sunday Times* taken up the *Eye* story of the Liechtenstein links of Glen Moreno, the man chosen by Gordon Brown to be the taxpayers' champion, than the Tories jumped in too. It then became inevitable that Moreno could no longer continue as acting chairman of UK Financial Investments, the body looking after large swathes of British banking (and its offshore network) now owned by, er, us.

What is puzzling, however, is why it took chancellor Alistair Darling so long to ditch Moreno, his Liechtenstein connection being so very damaging.

As the *Eye* revealed, he was a trustee in a private banking empire in the principality which exists to promote, ahem, tax-dodging. When Treasury minister Stephen Timms admitted to *Panorama* recently that certain tax havens needed to clean up their act, BBC reporter Jon Sweeney pressed him to name to names. "Liechtenstein," blurted out Timms.

Indeed, the Liechtenstein royal family's private banking group had been used by tax evaders so extensively that Britain's HM Revenue and Customs last year paid £100,000 for (stolen) LGT account details. HMRC boss Dave Hartnett told *Panorama* that the evidence presented him with "more than smoking guns – smoking tanks, smoking howitzers" and said some tax evasion investigations had already been settled. One lawyer told *Panorama* that, by facilitating tax evasion, Liechtenstein was no more than "a criminal enterprise".

Yet when Andrew Marr, on his TV show on the morning of the *ST* story, put it to Darling that Moreno's position was "not right", the chancellor babbled: "Like a lot of these guys, you know, they've been involved in quite a few things."

THE *Panorama* investigation into tax havens allowed reporter Sweeney to show off to camera, skiing down a Swiss slope in a business suit and emerging from the water off Jersey in an alarmingly tight wetsuit.

It also enabled him to dredge up footage from the Cayman Islands of Ugland House, a single building which poses as the official home of more than 18,000 companies and which is the office of a prominent law firm, Maples and Calder, experts at helping tax avoiders in a thoroughly legal and above-board fashion.

The Maples of the firm's title is in fact its founder, the Conservative MP John Maples. But *Panorama* didn't have time to reveal this, nor interview Maples and ask him how he reconciles the work of the law firm which he founded with his ambition to belong to a government which would rely for its every move on money derived from taxes. Nor would it have been too hard to secure an interview, Maples being married to Sweeney's *Panorama* colleague, Jane Corbin.

OVER at the *Financial Times*, meanwhile, top columnist Matthew Engel was sent to Liechtenstein to report on the mounting international pressure facing the tiny tax haven.

"Lying low is risky for Liechtenstein," he wrote on 6 February. "Now after a year of devastatingly bad publicity, there is a growing consensus here that Liechtenstein will have to offer wholehearted co-operation with the US and EU on suspected tax evaders – or face potential ruin." Engel added: "As the saying goes: 'Swiss bankers keep their lips sealed, but the Liechtenstein bankers don't even have tongues'."

No one knows this better than the *FT*'s very own boss, £450,000-a-year Pearson chairman and taxpayers' champion… Glen Moreno!

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The most radical act I can recall was to climb on to Harold Wilson's car and shout 'Out! Out!' until a large policeman grabbed me by the knees and carefully deposited me on the pavement."

*– **Prof Alison Richard** describes her radical student past in an interview marking her appointment as Cambridge vice-chancellor in 2003.*

"I deeply regret that a single member of the audience this afternoon failed to show the respect for our speaker that is customary at Cambridge. This university is a place for considered argument and debate, not for shoe-throwing."

*– **Prof Alison Richard** on the protester who threw a shoe at Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao when he gave a talk at Cambridge University this month.*

● See University News, p. 28

Street Of Shame

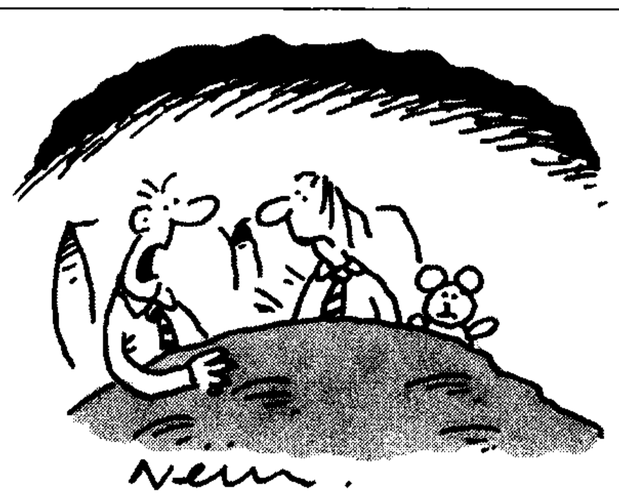
LORD Gnome is happy to have played a small part in jogging the conscience of his fellow peer Lord Rothermere, who belatedly rediscovered his sense of *noblesse oblige* last week.

In the last *Eye* we noted that *Evening Standard* hacks who were made redundant by the new owner, KGB veteran Alexander Lebedev, could expect no more than the legal minimum – one week's pay for each year served – as against the "enhanced redundancy" entitlement in their previous contracts with Associated Newspapers. Even staff who had worked at the *Standard* for 20 or 30 years would have their pay-off capped at £12,000, whereas before they might have received up to £70,000.

Young Jonathan Rothermere, a sensitive soul, was mortified by our suggestion that he'd sold the hacks down the river – and that his late father would be ashamed of him. After reading this and a similar attack by the *Guardian*'s Roy Greenslade ("Rothermere plays Pontius Pilate"), he hastily announced a "one-off discretionary and non-contractual" promise to make up the difference.

THE mood at the *Standard* is still none too chirpy, however: new editor Geordie Greig was received in stony silence when he addressed the staff last week. And the paper's street-vendors are gloomier still. They claim that sales have plummeted by between 30 and 40 percent over the last month.

This is astounding. Between December and January the *Standard*'s circulation actually rose (for the fourth successive month), to 292,976. Why the sudden mass exodus of readers? The reasons are no doubt many and various – the credit crunch, an aversion to KGB men, etc – but the biggest factor is a deranged campaign by Andrew Mullins, the paper's managing director, to ban vendors and newsagents in "low-yield locations" from receiving the *Standard*. His definition of a low-yield location is so broad that in large areas of the capital – Edgware, Wembley, much of south and east London – it's now impossible to buy the paper at all, and so the circulation is in freefall. Great work, Andy!



"We'd better take precautions – call Max Clifford!"

JOBS WATCH

"DID Ken Clarke sound particularly angry about the latest rise in unemployment, announced on Wednesday?" the *Independent*'s City diary asked last week.

"If so, that may be because he's just lost his job – well, one of them. In these tough times for the hedge fund business, Centaurus, the US hedge fund group, has just got rid of its advisory board – including the Conservatives' shadow business secretary. Poor Ken is yet another sad unemployment statistic."

Not such a poor Ken, actually: Independent News & Media, the *Indie*'s parent company, pays him €65,000 a year to sit on its advisory board. Perish the thought that cash-strapped INM might have to make its advisory board redundant, too.

"LOSING your job should be seen as a chance to create a new future," the *Times* chirrups merrily in a big feature on "How to… bounce back from redundancy".

Its top ten tips include "Be prepared: Be ready for the worst possible scenario. Keep your CV updated", and "Negotiate: You don't have to take the first package you are offered"

All very useful, no doubt, for the 65 News International staff, including 15 hacks and subs on the *Times*, who learnt the following week that they were being sacked as part of an efficiency drive.

"THE horror show of the economic meltdown is entering living rooms all over Britain," declared the *Sun* last week. "Many young people will never have experienced anything like it… Cash will be tight. Student loans will weigh them down just when some firms are expecting them to work for nothing."

That would be firms such as… News International, publisher of the *Sun*, which is currently offering "one lucky reader the chance to enter the world of fashion journalism" with an internship on the *Sunday Times Style* magazine.

"Working with the editorial team he or she will conduct research for features, submit ideas, transcribe interviews, call in photos for stories and assist in the day-to-day activities of a busy editorial office, including essential administrative tasks." Much smaller print specifies that this is "an unpaid two-week internship… Travel, food, accommodation and other general expenses are not covered."

WHEN not sacking most of his subeditors, *Daily Express* editor Peter "Mentally" Hill has been berating his few remaining staff for their untidiness. "The office is a tip," he complained in an email. "Start respecting the place."

But why should they respect a place that doesn't respect them? On the very day Hill issued his threat, night editor Keith Ging turned up for work only to find that his swipe-card wouldn't let him through the turnstiles. Bemused, he consulted security. "Ah, Human Resources would like a word with you," said the man. Mr Ging, a servant to the *Express* for 20 years, was then informed he had been made compulsorily redundant. Nice.

AS IF Lloyds Banking Group hadn't a bad enough headache already, it spent all last week being yelled at by the *Guardian* for allegedly pouring hundreds of millions of pounds into a transatlantic accounting dodge.

"Lloyds faces accusations of tax avoidance," the front page boomed on 11 February. The next day, a profile of Lloyds chief executive Eric Daniels described him as the "banker who's just like you and me… apart from his £2.79m pay packet". A day later there was yet more: "Darling offers tax abuse pledge but few words on Lloyds… For the second day, it [the bank] refused to explain the nature of loans identified by the *Guardian*."

As the last issue of the *Eye* pointed out, one senior *Grauniad* figure knows rather a lot about the inner workings of Lloyds. *Guardian* chief executive Carolyn McCall happens to be a non-executive director of the bank, a fact the paper felt unable to mention.

TURKI ON THE MENU

THE few remaining hacks at the *Financial Times* are puzzling over the paper's apparent love-in with the rulers of Saudi Arabia, reflected in the decision to publish a tortuous op-ed piece by Prince Turki al-Faisal, who ran Saudi intelligence when it was backing the Taliban and even al Qaeda in Afghanistan but is now remarketed as a "moderate".

In his *FT* column the prince warned President Barack Obama that support for Israel threatens the "special relationship" with Saudi Arabia, under which the US has bought oil while ignoring the chopping off of heads and the spreading of puritanical Wahhabi Islam around the world.

The answer to the puzzle can be found in the delusions of grandeur of *FT* editor Lionel Barber and his Middle East editor, Roula Khalaf, a British/Lebanese Christian who has long courted the Saudis and their protégés across the region. Before and after the western invasion of Iraq in 2003, she championed Iyyad Allawi, a former Iraqi Baathist close to Saudi intelligence, who, disastrously, was prime minister in Baghdad in 2004-05 when his defence minister, Hazim Shaalan, stole more than $1bn.

Unsurprisingly, the *FT* has played down any Saudi involvement in violence in Iraq, ignoring the Saudi clerics financing and encouraging hardline Wahhabi militants and suicide-bombers. It also neglected to report the recent killing in Gaza of a Saudi jihadi fighter named Abdul-Hadi Al-Murry. Nor did it mention that Nazar Rayan, the Hamas leader killed by Israel, had studied in Saudi Arabia under the leading Wahhabi/Salafi cleric Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Baraak.

Lionel Barber has seen himself as a major player in world politics since being called in to advise George Bush in 2001. He has now been persuaded by Khalaf that the *FT* can build bridges between the Saudis and Obama. Hence the Prince Turki piece, which she arranged. Hence also the headline on 27 January 2009, "Arabs respond warmly to Obama interview", a story written by Edward Luce in Washington and Roula Khalaf in London which attempted to show the Saudis how important they are. And the ridiculous piece a day later, "Obama sends clear signal via Saudi TV", recording that "Mr Obama gave his first television interview as president on Monday night to a Saudi-backed channel, the Dubai-based al-Arabiya". Why mention its Saudi backing all of a sudden?

Last October Barber flew to Beirut to interview Fouad Siniora, the Lebanese prime minister and a close Saudi ally. This too was arranged by Khalaf – but the *FT*'s Beirut correspondent, Ferry Biedermann, wasn't invited. Why? Because this was basically a chance to show *FT* support for the Saudi-backed government in Beirut. As a sign that the questioning wasn't likely to be too tough, Barber even took his wife to the interview. Can a regular slot on the comment page for Prince Turki be far behind?

HEADS IN THE SAND

"They say that Antigua has 365 beaches – one for every day of the year. The Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in North Sound was clearly designed with a leap year in mind because this is Antigua's 366th beach." – Jonathan Agnew, BBC News, 12 February.

"Antigua is famous for its 365 beaches, but there is enough sand on the outfield of the Sir Vivian Richards stadium to ensure they have one extra for a leap year." – Andrew McGlashan, Cricinfo, 12 February.

"Antigua prides itself on its beaches. There are, it is always touted in the holiday brochures, 365 of them, one for every day of the year. Then for good measure, they built the Sir Viv Richards Stadium, with an outfield so golden sandy that they now have leap year covered." – Mike Selvey, *Guardian*, 13 February.

"It is said that there are 365 beaches here in Antigua, one for each day of the year. Make that 366 including the Sir Vivian Richards cricket ground." – Stephen Brenkley, *Independent*, 13 February.

Job Title: POPE FITTERS MATE.
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Location: COSHAM, PORTSMOUTH, HAMPS.
Hours: 38 HOURS PER WEEK,

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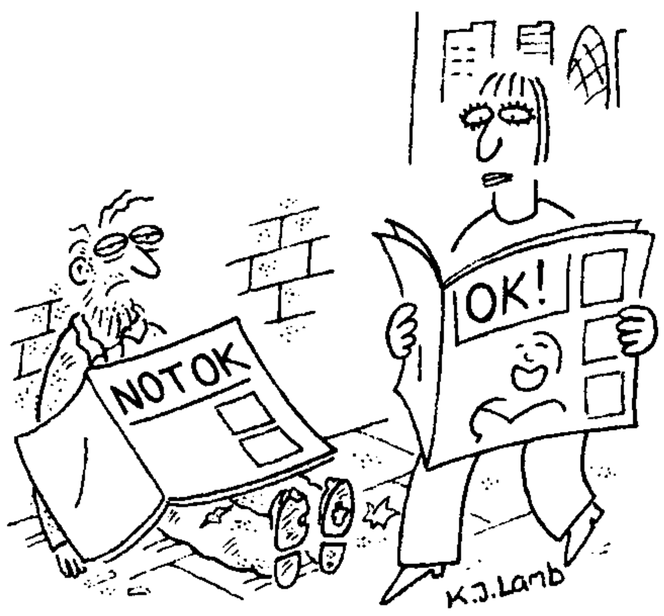


TELEGRAPH TWITS

LAST YEAR we reported how *Telegraph* hacks are encouraged to surf popular internet search keywords while writing copy for the online edition. Confirmation has now come from a surprising source – none other than Marcus Warren, editor of telegraph.co.uk.

In a rather sniffy review of James Harkin's new book *Cyburbia* for *Management Today*, Warren complains that Harkin "sometimes sounds as paranoid as any deluded conspiracy theorist in the most whacko chatroom. Journalists who include search keywords in their copy online 'find themselves strapped uncomfortably into our electronic id', he argues, citing 'anecdotal evidence' that this sinister practice actually goes on… Well, as editor of the UK's fastest-growing newspaper website, I can assure you that my colleagues are encouraged to take account of what the strongest search terms are for any story they write."

It's all true, then; but not sinister in the least. As Warren explains: "That's part of the basic hygiene of modern journalism." Now wash your hands…

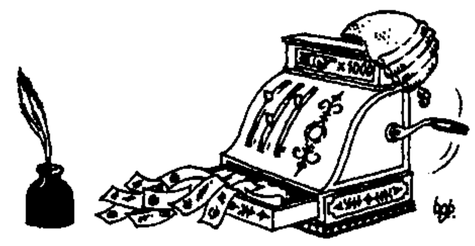
WHEN Will Lewis recruited yet another assistant editor from the *Daily Mail* last week, in the form of political hack Ben Brogan, the thirsty *Maily Telegraph* editor paid him the ultimate compliment. "I am a big fan of his blog, which is a must-read," he raved.

Torygraph hacks are used to Thirsty Will's obsession with all things digital – as opposed to, er, editing a newspaper – so it's no surprise to them that he is now an obsessive Twitterer. And what thrilling news he imparts! "Making porridge for the children," he writes in one entry. Then he announces: "Going swimming." Later: "At the cinema waiting for my wife."

He even makes a trip to the Baftas sound Pooterish: "I am not that good at spotting celebrities alas. I have however seen that couple from *Spooks*. And [*FT* editor] Lionel Barber." There is one reason for *Telegraph* hacks to follow their boss's witless Twitterings: at least they know when he isn't going to be in the office.

Next Wednesday the Year group will be in the grounds and therefore the children will require outdoor clothes and willies. (All named.).

Paragon School Newsletter, Bath



LIBEL NEWS

IN THE *New York Review of Books*, Alan Rusbridger, editor of the *Grauniad*, tells American readers how Britain's libel laws exerted a devastating "chilling effect" on investigative journalism.

Bruised after fighting off a crushing libel writ from Tesco and its attack dog solicitors from Carter Fuck, he warns that cash-strapped British editors may soon refuse to investigate such "complicated matters as corporate tax structures or the behaviour of investment banks" for fear of crippling costs.

How true. The best example of the press running scared of plutocrats is the case of Nadhmi Auchi (*Eyes passim*). One newspaper group's lawyers pulled from the web articles that explored the Iraqi-born British billionaire's shady past in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and his conviction for fraud in France. They went behind the back of reporters and told Carter Fuck that their colleagues' journalism was inaccurate, allegations the National Union of Journalists strongly disputes.

Readers of the *New York Review of Books* would have loved to hear more because, as the *Eye* has reported, Auchi was the business partner of Barack Obama's buddy Tony Rezko, now in a Chicago prison for fraud, and a fundraiser for Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich, impeached last month on corruption charges.

But not a word about his links to Chicago operators appeared in the papers of our cowering British newspaper group, however, because its lawyers have now banned reporters from writing about Auchi. And the name of the newspaper group? The *Grauniad & Observer*, editor-in-chief – Mr A Rusbridger.

RICHARD "Dirty" Desmond's newspapers have suffered so many libel defeats lately one could easily overlook last week's capitulation by the *Sunday Express*, which paid damages and costs to the fund manager Pentagon Capital Management for a story published in July 2008. A red-faced Dirty Des would certainly like us to overlook it, since the case revealed how his publications pursue his private feuds for him.

As we revealed in *Eye* 1224, Desmond was for several years a client of Pentagon, and earned "tens of millions of dollars" from investments made by its partners Jafar Omid and Lewis Chester, the latter a university friend of David Cameron. Last March they suspended trading and started returning the £1bn they had under management – but couldn't return £75,000 which was kept in Dezco, a trust fund for Des's son. They were advised that it would be illegal for them to pay out since the fund wasn't under their control. Omid tried to explain this over the phone.

"Don't go on," Des snarled back, "because you're going to aggravate me. So look, just send me a cheque back, right, or we are not going to be friends – we are going to be enemies… Let me tell you something, Jafar, as good a friend as I am, I'm the worst fucking enemy you'll ever have."

Three days later the *Sunday Express* ran a story – "Cameron's friend and £1bn he won't give back" – which falsely accused Chester and Omid of cynically exploiting small investors to enrich themselves. "What the article did not mention was the involvement of the *Sunday Express* proprietor Richard Desmond," Pentagon's lawyer, David Price, told the high court last week. "Mr Desmond accepts that it was his comments in the presence of *Sunday Express* journalists that prompted the *Sunday Express* to publish the article." Dirty Des's counsel, Ian Helme, confirmed to Mr Justice Eady that "I agree with everything Mr Price has said".

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Please be mindful about how this looks and what public opinion will be. The banks have got to be sensitive to public opinion and I think they need to think about what is the best way forward."

– Peter Mandelson addresses Royal Bank of Scotland executives on "exorbitant" bonus payments, 5 February 2009

"It's merely a top-up. I don't know precisely how much he'll get, but where he's entitled to an allowance there's no reason for him to forgo that allowance. I can't comment on precisely how much he'll get."

– Spokesman for Peter Mandelson on his £234,000 "transitionary payments" on top of his salary for moving jobs from Brussels to London, 12 October 2008

CALL ME, DAVE

WHICH illustrious new suits have the Tories enrolled for their so-called "economic recovery council"?

Step forward former banker Sir James Sassoon, who until September was Gordon Brown's "City ambassador", promoting the banks that within months would be so cruelly exposed. Before that, from 2002 to 2005, Sassoon was in charge of financial regulation policy at the Treasury as it sucked up to the City and let the banks run amok.

Batting for Britain alongside Sassoon is another banker, Sir Peter Middleton, chairman of Barclays during some of its most prolific tax-avoiding years until 2004. Then there's Sir Christopher Gent, chief executive of Vodafone when it acquired German telecoms company Mannesman through a Luxembourg tax dodge in 1999 (which HMRC is still fighting in the courts).

Gent paid £112bn for Mannesman, but – there are shades of RBS's disastrous ABN Amro acquisition here – Vodafone had to write it down by £23bn in 2006, plunging the firm into losses. Should all make for an interesting economic recovery under a new Tory government!

"It's my bonus cap"

GORDON BROWN'S BANKERS

WHEN Standard Chartered chairman Mervyn Davies was ennobled as a business minister last month, he was generally thought suitable because his bank had not found itself in the same trouble as most of the high street ones.

Contrary to previous reports, however, this was not due to responsible stewardship but to abandoning its dirtiest business instead.

Like other banks, Standard was seriously into packaging up dodgy mortgages and flogging them on as "structured investment vehicles". But unlike other banks, when its vehicles – known as Whistlejacket after an 18th century racehorse – got into trouble a year ago, Standard Chartered simply let them go bust, costing creditors billions. This was a big decision from Davies, who was then also chairing Gordon Brown's business council for Britain, that some say contributed to a drastic loss of confidence in the banking sector.

The other banks operating in the UK with similarly troubled SIVs – Citibank, HSBC and Dresdner – stood behind their SIVs by bringing the dodgy assets and liabilities back on to their own balance sheets. While Davies' actions may have helped Standard Chartered to stave off the drastic step of requiring help from the taxpayer, they were felt by many to have been pretty low by City standards – which takes some doing these days.

AMONG the other bankers Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling seem to think suitable to sort out financial services is Win Bischoff, former chairman of Citigroup, who is reviewing the City's operations for the chancellor.

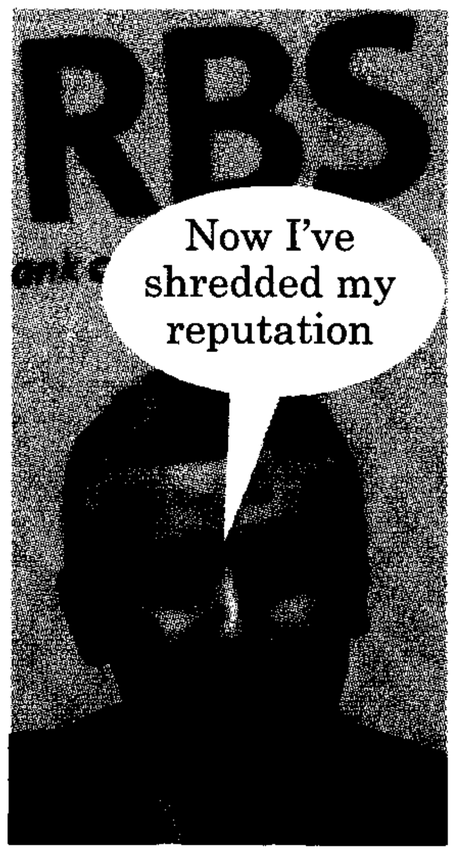
Bischoff came to prominence in 2000 when he incurred the wrath of investors in fund manager Schroders as he picked up a £5m bonus for selling the firm to Citigroup.

Things got better for Bischoff as well-paid chairman of Citigroup Europe and member of the bank's worldwide advisory board, thanks in great part to the bank's vigorous packaging up of mortgages for sale on the securitisation market.

Citigroup's $65bn losses have seen it handed the biggest bailout in the US, dumping $300bn of dud mortgage-backed securities on the American taxpayer so far.

Doubtless Mr Bischoff has some better ideas for British finance. But he cuts a positively Spartist figure next to Sir David Walker, the man chosen to spend a leisurely 12 months reporting on City bonuses. As chairman of Morgan Stanley, Sir David received and rubber-stamped these very bonuses (MS was renowned as a big payer). And when he was brought in for a similar review in response to the 2007 outcry over private equity he duly recommended a touch of self-regulation that a recent review has already shown not to be working.

FRED SPELLS IT OUT



GORDON BROWN claims Labour is "leading the way" and "sweeping aside the old short-term bonus culture of the past". But the behaviour of Labour luminaries when they get on company boards shows they are leading the way in the opposite direction.

Baroness Sally Morgan, a former Cabinet Office minister and member of Tony Blair's inner circle, joined a number of company boards after leaving office, including a job as director of care-homes firm Southern Cross. While she has been a director, Southern Cross came close to financial breakdown because of a misjudged debt-fuelled expansion, having borrowed colossal amounts to buy out the competition in the hope of winning most of the cash the government doles out to private homes. Overstretched, Southern Cross actually broke its banking covenants.

In theory non-executive directors are supposed to act as a check on the foolish schemes of over-excited executives, but Morgan and her fellow directors do not appear to have done anything of the sort. Now she and her fellow board members want to fling around some bonuses, against the advice of shareholder activist group, PIRC.

Southern Cross's "remuneration committee" – including Morgan – wants to give finance director Richard Midmer a £385,000 bonus because he renegotiated the company's debts. However, PIRC says he should only be rewarded for longer-term work, while it also objects to "golden hellos" for Midmer and new chief executive, Jamie Buchan.

Bonuses for short-term achievement, proposed by one of the central figures of the New Labour "project"? What would Gordon say!

REASSURING news from the Bank of England website, which reveals who is in charge of keeping the country's economy on an even keel in these difficult times.

"The Financial Stability operational area has the main responsibility for discharging the Bank's remit to contribute to the maintenance of the stability of the financial system as a whole," we learn from the "About the Bank: Structure" page. And who exactly is in charge of "Systemic Risk Assessment" in the division? Er, "vacant".

Q: Who is the odd man out from the following list?

Lord Stevenson, former chairman, HBOS,
Andy Hornby, former chief executive, HBOS,
Sir Fred Goodwin, former chief executive, Royal Bank of Scotland, Sir Tom McKillop, former chairman, RBS, John McFall MP, chairman of Treasury select committee, Alistair Darling, Chancellor of Exchequer, Sir Terry Wogan, presenter of Radio 2 breakfast show

A: Sir Terry Wogan. He is the only one with a banking qualification. (*With thanks to Eye reader William McHugh.*)

"MY FATHER used to tell me to 'beware the big deal'. What he meant was I should be wary of people promising me the earth, and, if I did invest, I shouldn't be tempted to bankrupt the firm!"

Who has these words of wisdom for readers of the March edition of *Good Housekeeping*? Why none other than Nicola Horlick, former "superwoman" and CEO of Bramdean Asset Management. She offers an "Insider Insight: If you have a large sum of money to invest, use professionals to do it for you. In such a fast-moving world, it's impossible for ordinary people to invest successfully without professional help…

"Having managed some large investment businesses and now a boutique business, I've come to the conclusion it's a talent some people are born with. It's vital to research things properly before making an investment, but at the end of the day, some people just have a good gut feel for what will make money."

Alas, such modesty left no space to record Horlick's most recent victory – when Bramdean was forced to write off £12.4m of clients' money it had invested in funds controlled by Bernard Madoff. Bramdean handed over nearly 10 percent of one fund to Madoff, with the ever-cautious Horlick declaring last May: "Madoff is someone who is very, very good at calling the US equity market."

NURSING CRIMES

DESPITE having spectacularly failed to reduce teenage pregnancy, the government is now backing out of its pledge to have a school nurse in every secondary school by 2010.

The plan to have a "full-time, year-round, qualified school nurse" in every secondary in England (and visiting its surrounding primary schools) was announced in 2004, with a promise of new funding to achieve it. The government said school nurses had an important role in tackling "obesity, sexual health, reduction of teenage pregnancy, emotional health and wellbeing, healthy eating, smoking, drugs and alcohol". However, as reported in *Eye* 1210, just 893 of the country's 3,300 secondary schools had full-time school nurses at the last count and there aren't nearly enough people currently doing the specialist training to meet the target on time.

There's no mention of the promise in the *Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures* policy, launched last week in the midst of the furore over baby Maisie and her young parents. Instead it proposes new school health teams, including nurses and support staff, which will cover a "local area". Nurses' group the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association has questioned the likely size of these "local areas" – given the current numbers they would be vast – and called for more school nurses to be trained.

IT DOESN'T ADD UP

DESPITE the stock market collapse posing serious questions of the national pension savings scheme (NPSS), under which workers will be automatically enrolled on a stock market-based scheme from 2012, pensions minister James Purnell has confirmed that the scheme is still going ahead.

"For over 95 percent," says Purnell, "on standard assumptions the expected increase in income is greater than the cost of their contributions." Sounds comforting? Only if you think it's acceptable that 5 percent, or 250,000 people on current estimates, pour their money down the drain. But the real problem is that the "standard assumptions" are recklessly optimistic.

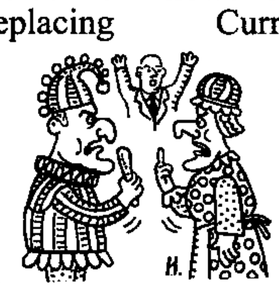
The brainchild of Financial Services Authority chairman Lord (Adair) Turner, the NPSS assumes that money put on the stock market will grow by 6 percent *a year* before the inevitable costs are subtracted. Yet, over 20-year periods, returns have been less than 4 percent around a third of the time. Indeed, cash put on the market in 1999 is now worth less than it was then.

At best, some will do well while plenty get shafted: an interesting Labour policy for old age. In Australia, a similar scheme to the NPSS has seen workers lose a quarter of their pension savings in the last year.

CALLED TO ORDURE

NO more trebles all round at the National Audit Office (NAO). That was the message Whitehall's new spending hawk was keen to project at a limp "pre-appointment hearing" at the House of Commons.

Amyas Morse, whose name has a pleasing ring of 17th century Puritanism to it, is to be the new comptroller and auditor-general, replacing Sir John Bourn whose extravagance with the exotic foreign freebies, wife in tow, was extensively revealed in *Private Eye*. Bourn had been in the job since 1988 and his departure is a major blow to the travel trade, if nothing else.



His replacement is a prim little fella with a fluting voice and the air of a Scripture master, who turned up for his confirmation hearing at the public accounts committee without, alas, his stovepipe hat and Cromwellian smock. But he was quick to pronounce his monklike tastes and said that when he takes over the National Audit Office, he will monitor staff's lunch habits closely.

Pooh-poohing lavish hospitality, he said: "I prefer doing business over a sandwich at my desk in the office." One or two of the MPs looked slightly deflated at this. Bang went any idea of getting-to-know-you troughings with Amyas at the Connaught Grill!

Morse said that one reason he left the private sector to enter the civil service in 2006 was that the foreign business travel did "not agree with my health". Translation: no five-star weekends away for me and my missus, thank you. On domestic freebies, he said: "I will keep a hospitality book and it will be exhibited to my chairman on a regular basis."

Last year, when he was commercial director of the Ministry of Defence, Morse had been invited to 51 different freebies of which he declined all but 11. Of these, "three or four were individual dinners at the RAC club in Pall Mall, which I don't regard as excessive". The rest had been group outings. He stressed that he moved to Whitehall because "I happen to be an enthusiast for work and I have always been interested by public service". A veritable saint!

If the committee's interrogation was tame, this was perhaps because its members had put Morse up for the job. The comptroller is Whitehall's speed cop, pouncing on various government departments to check they are handling public money properly. However, one of the most profligate departments is, of course, the Ministry of Defence, where some of the biggest cheques in the past couple of years have been signed by, er, one A. Morse. It was Morse, for instance, who supervised the deal on a new aircraft carrier.

David Curry (Con, Skipton & Ripon) wanted to know when Morse would be starting his new job. "June this year," he said Morse. And when would he be leaving his job at the MoD? "The Friday beforehand," said Morse sweetly. Curry didn't think much of this. "If you're going to be the chief gamekeeper, shouldn't you get out now?" he asked.

Curry argued that being comptroller was "an intensely political position" and that there was surely a danger that MoD budget keepers would think: "Oh, it's old Amyas coming in, we'll be all right." Would he give the committee the assurance that he would kick the MoD up the backside and maintain proper objectivity when the inevitable day arrived that his National Audit Office had to investigate defence procurement projects which had been run by Morse himself? Morse: "I absolutely give you that assurance."

Don Touhig (Lab, Islwyn), himself a former defence minister, wondered how much money the MoD had wasted during Morse's time as commercial director. Morse waffled and evaded and insisted that he would be "not easily pushed over" when he took over his new job.

The other conflict-of-interest worry is Morse's background, until 2006, as a creature of big-firm accountancy. He was a "global managing partner" at Pricewaterhouse Cooper, a firm which has benefited enormously from Labour's private finance initiatives and cosy consultancy arrangements.

On the PFI Morse was less declamatory than he had been on freebies. "I am neutral about it," he said, suddenly dead cautious, ears pinkening. "I see it as a tool in a toolkit. I'd never be an advocate of it. It's just an instrument."

One reason for his delicacy was that although many MPs are dubious about PFI projects and their long, usurious loan terms, Labour loyalists remain gung-ho for them. Notorious Broonite stooge Nigel Griffiths (Lab, Edinburgh S) went into a long lecture about how PFIs had transformed his constituency into a public amenities paradise.

Austin Mitchell (Lab, Grimsby) noted that a few years ago PwC had advised the MoD on a vastly wasteful new PFI building project. Morse denied having had any involvement with that. "I was doing global management," he said.

Whatever happens when he takes over, Morse will at least not be "doing a Sir John Bourn" and staying in the job for 20 years. His contract is for 10 years. After that, he promises, he will quit. "Not more than that, heavens," he said.

'Gavel Basher'

BLIND DATA

NOT a single government department has signed up to the Personal Information Promise, a perfectly good data protection practice scheme launched last month by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Organisations including T-Mobile, trade union Unison, Royal Mail and several local councils, police forces and NHS Trusts have already adopted the promise, which was introduced on European Data Protection Day (28 January, for those who didn't celebrate it). The promise asks them to go "further than just the letter of the law" in handling individuals' data and to put appropriate financial resources and training into their safeguards.

The list of early adopters didn't include a single Whitehall department, so privacy campaigners No2ID made a freedom of information request to the ICO, who promptly replied that it had invited the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions but that "to date we have not received a response from the government departments approached".

The British Council, meanwhile, marked Data Protection Day by... admitting that it had lost a payroll data disk containing the bank details of 2,000 staff. The international education quango said the disk had been lost in December while in transit by TNT courier.

THE rebranded "new National Offender Management Service" has just published its new strategic business plan to take it into 2011. And it looks just like its old plans – a major programme to cope with increasing numbers of prisoners, more "competition" (ie privatisation), and promises to improve efficiency.

At least it promises a leaner headquarters, with power and control going to regional and local services. Which is just as well, as the document reveals that costs at NOMs HQ have risen to a staggering £1.01bn – almost £200m more than the entire probation budget for supervising nearly 250,000 offenders and half the cost of running the entire prison network.

However, plans to delegate to ten new DOMs (directors of offender management) may be as doomed as old NOMs efforts to pass power to ten, er, ROMs (regional offender managers). Elfyn Llwyd, a Plaid Cymru MP and member of the justice unions parliamentary group, tells the *Eye* that DOMs is Welsh for cowshit. "And that just about sums up what I think has been happening with NOMs for the last four years," he added.

MINISTERS have found a great way to get drug addicts back to work: cut their benefits if they fail to undergo a drug assessment and treatment programme. Except there will be nowhere to go for treatment and/or rehabilitation unless they are exceedingly wealthy and can pay for a posh detox clinic.

The probation service supervises 240,000 offenders and more than two-thirds of them are drug-dependent. Napo, the probation officers' union, said that at any one time only about 5,000 of them were on treatment programmes.

Moreover, offenders take priority while those referred by their GPs often have to wait many months. Thus, if this "reform" is implemented, it would overwhelm the system and lead to waiting lists years long. And if addicts' benefits are cut many will simply turn to crime to fund their habit. Brilliant!

TV

Minder (Five)

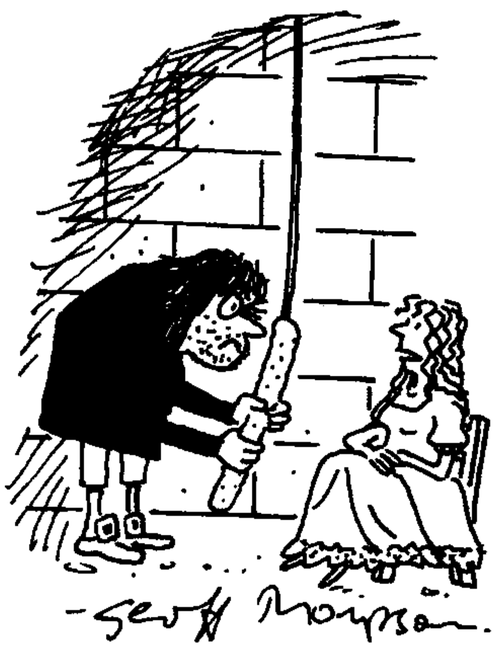
EVEN in a fortnight characterised by honks of indignation (*Boys and Girls Alone* – the irresponsibility!) and bleats of distress (the eviction of Todd Carty from *Dancing On Ice* – the polyester!), it was difficult to miss the gentle, though no less anguished, lowing that greeted the return of *Minder*.

Here, bugled Five, was a big, primetime, sort-of-30th-anniversary "re-imagining" of the beloved 1980s comedy-drama, featuring Shane Richie as loveable wheeler-dealer Archie "nephew of Arthur" Daley and a man called Lex Shrapnel as his sensible, streetwise sidekick, Jamie Cartwright. The nation shuddered and reached for its gun. "Outrage!" we spluttered as we recalled the original series, in which George Cole fell over in a succession of East End car lots while Dennis Waterman rolled his eyes and made barnyard noises at passing receptionists.

Such horror was hardly surprising. Launched in 1979, *Minder* remains one of TV's most memorable comedy dramas, not least because every one of its 109 episodes followed precisely the same narrative arc. To wit: Arfur launches some scam or other, the local heavies attempt to muscle in on the action, a thug gets punched by Terry McCann (Waterman) and lands on the bonnet of a Ford Grenada – brief pause for a visual gag involving Arfur's trilby – before it's off to the pub to watch accident-prone veteran and long-suffering greenhorn enjoy a self-congratulatory chuckle over a pint of Watneys Red Barrel.

It was rubbish. But, crucially, it was likeable, warm-hearted rubbish and it struck a chord with the public, who remained loyal to the duo's antics until the plug was pulled in 1994, by which point its brand of cocked-trilby consumerism seemed best left to the 1980s. And now, in answer to precisely nobody's prayers, it's back. And, in news that will come as a surprise to even less, it's not very good.

Where the original ITV series benefited from a cast-iron identity – in essence, *The Sweeney* in a spinning bowtie – the remake is an uncomfortable, self-conscious affair. The most obvious starting point is the iconic theme tune which, having been "updated" with guitars and drums, is now curiously reminiscent of the sort of palliative, studio-session glam-rock you'd find on a *Top Of The Pops* covers album from 1974. The premise, at least, remains the same. Here, reckless, cheerful Archie and disapproving, rational assistant Jamie clatter around London in cheap suits, exploiting legal loopholes and dabbling in good-natured cons while scattering malapropisms like dandruff.



"Just 'Bong'? That's not much of a ringtone!"

Like his camel-coated uncle, affable con-trepreneur Archie bemoans the fact that fings ain't wot they used to be and says things like, "30 percent? You're 'avin a giraffe!" because he is a cockney and this is what cockneys say. Apparently. So it's the same. Sort of. And yet this is very much *Minder: The Next Generation.*

There is a faint, lemony smell to the proceedings, as if everything's been sprayed with an antibacterial kitchen cleaner. It's all a bit organic, a bit Fair Trade. The production values are high, the direction fashionably fast-paced and the guest stars have been plucked from an appreciably elevated stratum of the "familiar comic actors" knoll (last week we got Rik Mayall giving it the full Mayall; this week it's Maureen Lipman doing "sassy old bird" in a magenta shawl). But where the series really fails is in its inability to establish a solid identity for itself.

While other remakes have succeeded in capturing a new audience by balancing established themes with current concerns (see: *Doctor Who*, *Battlestar Galactica* and, to a lesser extent, Auntie's recent reinvention of apocalypse-wow eco-drama *Survivors*), *Minder* seems torn between a misty-eyed, *Life On Mars*-y version of the past and a bloodless, idealised model of the present. Where Arfur and Tel fought the law and the law lost, Archie and Jamie are keen to inform us that although they are by no means law-abiding citizens, they are, ultimately, on the side of Good. Accordingly, they help the elderly, befriend the lonely and assist the rozzers with their inquiries. Why, behind the criminal records and counterfeit "Kalvin Clein" pants, they're Just Like Us. And in case we should forget that this is Now, as opposed to, presumably, Then, there are constant, excruciating references to the current economic crisis. "We've all got to tighten our belts, haven't we?" shouts Archie, above the unmistakable thwickety-thwack of *Minder*'s producers patting themselves on the back.

The success of *Doctor Who* reminds us that remakes need be neither bowdlerized retreads nor witless in-jokes; that nostalgia, when handled with wit and insight, can be as legitimate an excuse for a new series as anything else. Alas, this – to borrow one of Archie's cockney colloquialisms – is just pony.

'Doofer'

DUMB BRITAIN

Are You Smarter Than A Ten-Year-Old? (Sky One)

Presenter: Mount Everest is in which mountain range?

Contestant: It's in Nepal. So, I imagine, it would be the Andes.

Contestant: I'd like to try Age 7 History .

Presenter: What was the Roman name for the city of London?

Contestant: I'm thinking. Do you know what I'm thinking? I think the Romans actually called it the same we did: they actually called it London.

talkSPORT

Ronnie Irani: In six nations rugby, what is the traditional emblem of the French team?

Contestant: An onion?

MEDIA NEWS

A SORRY TALE

"SAYING sorry because you've been forced to means you're not sorry at all. An apology has to be real to heal. As GK Chesterton said: 'A stiff apology is a second insult'," thundered Jeremy Clarkson in his *Sunday Times* column back in March 2004.

Clarkson had been told to apologise by the BBC for damaging a tree during *Top Gear* filming. But as he wrote: "I wasn't sorry then, and I'm not sorry now. I only agreed to say I was because then the situation would die down."

Last week Clarkson issued the following statement via the BBC in the wake of his calling Gordon Brown a "one-eyed Scottish idiot": "In the heat of the moment I made a remark about the prime minister's personal appearance for which, upon reflection, I apologise."

Is this the kind of "fulsome apology" that BBC1 controller Jay Hunt keeps insisting she required from Clarkson's now sacked corporation colleague, Carol Thatcher?

Birtish Jobs For Birtish Workers

PESTON'S PROPHECIES

THE Peston is mightier than the sword, as the BBC's business editor modestly reminded *Today* listeners last week.

"In the case of RBS, why on earth did it buy this, or a big chunk of this, enormous Dutch bank ABN? It paid massively too much for it," he told listeners. "And to be clear – at the time that it was buying ABN, people like me, lots of people, were saying this was a deal too far."

If only RBS had listened to Robert Peston, it wouldn't have gone "careering into this disastrous deal". Er, really?

"It has been the great dream of Britain's big banks to merge with a large continental rival, and for Barclays that dream may at last be coming true," Peston raved on 19 March 2007, when Barclays rather than RBS was wooing ABN. "Simply to have got to the stage where it is in exclusive merger talks with ABN is quite a feat."

A month later, on 23 April, there was still no talk of a deal too far: "The most ambitious takeover by one European bank of a European bank from another country. This would create… a top-five world bank. And for once it looks like a British organisation taking the initiative and buying something overseas rather than being bought itself."

Then RBS's Sir Fred Goodwin stepped in and outbid Barclays. "What of RBS?" Peston mused on 3 October 2007, after the deal went through. "It bravely becomes significantly bigger in global investment banking and commercial banking at a time when retrenchment might seem more appropriate. Investing against the cycle is often a recipe for success."

As for the apparently huge price, "RBS's redoubtable chief executive, Sir Fred Goodwin, would rather stick pins in his eyes than overpay." Besides, "RBS is a legendary cost-cutter. And doubtless it will display those talents to the full in the integration of its bits of ABN."

Why were Goodwin and his colleagues so reckless? Perhaps they had been reassured by Peston's advice of 7 September 2007: "Make no mistake, I am not forecasting that any big bank will become insolvent. Please don't panic." RBS duly refused to panic, and went careering over the cliff.

EFFICIENCY, PT 1

A NEW National Audit Office report into BBC efficiency has whipped up rumours among staff at BBC radio of yet more redundancies on the way.

Comparing the costs of producing content with those of rival commercial radio stations, the NAO concludes that the Beeb's costs are higher and that it "should work with commercial radio stations to identify where and how savings can be made". Really? Has the NAO actually listened to any commercial radio lately?

The BBC is already committed to savings of £86m and any further cuts can only come either from a reduction in the number of quality drama, current-affairs and documentary programmes, or from a reduction in staff.

Total staff costs, including wages and pension pots, are weighted significantly by the vast salaries enjoyed by a very few presenters and senior managers. But the BBC Trust ensured that confidentiality clauses prevented the NAO from identifying the riches enjoyed by the favoured few, ensuring that any sacrifices that have to be made will be spread across the board.

EFFICIENCY, PT 2

CONFIDENTIALITY clauses also protect Siemens IT from having to disclose the full cost of its contract with the BBC to provide a new "content delivery programme", including digital phones for its production staff. Analysts estimate it to be worth £80m.

Anyone within the BBC who wishes to call Siemens to check this figure will struggle. After nearly a year in service, many of the new phones still do not work.

SNOWBALLS

"The snow has done what the Luftwaffe failed to do," observed Emily Maitlis when introducing the weather on BBC News. "Actually, no it hasn't," replied the weatherman.

NEWS FROM TASHKENT

BBC MONITORING's bureau in Tashkent has been found guilty in an Uzbek court of "unfairly and illegally" sacking one of its employees. The BBC had to stump up $7,200 compensation and was ordered to pay costs for the three-year legal battle, caused by management's refusal to pay $720 in wages the BBC owed to the sacked man.

This was the latest in a series of embarrassments for the unit's head, Jamil Burna-Asefi, who has faced accusations of riding roughshod over labour laws since taking up his post in 2004. His first managerial decision was to sack a sub-editor from the Kazakh team, causing the entire staff to complain en masse to the head office of BBC Monitoring at Caversham.

Burna-Asefi promptly disbanded the team and sacked all those who had complained, with the full support of his boss, Peter Robertson, who was busy conducting a similar purge of his own experienced staff.

JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

29 January: Lord Carter delivers interim report on future of broadcasting, "Digital Britain", proposing creation of a "second public service organisation" formed of Channel 4, BBC Worldwide and others from the "wider private and public sector".

4 February: Competition Commission blocks launch of Project Kangaroo, an online TV service which was a partnership between Channel 4, BBC Worldwide and ITV.

AD NAUSEAM

TASTELESS promo of the month goes to Virgin Wines, whose wine buyer Andrew Baker sent all Virgin customers an email last week advertising promotions on Australian wines.

"Help out our mates Down Under," was its subject line, delivered to inboxes the day after wildfires in central Victoria killed more than 180 people.

AS Terry Gilliam visited the UK to collect his Bafta fellowship, did he find time to watch any telly? If so, he might have seen T-Mobile's new "Dance" ad, which features a crowd of commuters in Liverpool St station breaking into synchronised dance moves and then continuing as if nothing had happened.

This was fed to the press as a spontaneous, 400-strong "flash mob", filmed and then broadcast within 48 hours. But the idea itself is lifted straight from Gilliam's film *The Fisher King*, which features a synchronised waltz in the middle of Grand Central Station, after which the participants continue as if nothing had happened.

"Life's for sharing," runs T-Mobile's current tag. It would appear creatives at Saatchi & Saatchi are taking their slogan literally.

"GETTING through the financial crisis isn't going to be easy," began a Lloyds TSB press ad last week, adding that good old Lloyds was "lending more than a helping hand": remarkably, it was proposing to lend actual money as well.

"It may be a tough climate," concluded the homespun copy, "but we won't leave you out in the cold." Of course they won't. Hence the final, cockle-warming line, in capital letters: "YOUR HOME MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON YOUR MORTGAGE."

GOING LIVE

BBC royal correspondent Nick Witchell was on the spot at Buckingham Palace for the launch of the Queen's new website, interviewing Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the internet.

"What did you think of it?" asked Witchell. "I haven't seen it," replied Sir Tim.

I-BSKYB

"Harry Redknapp believes Sky TV's new £bn deal with the Premier League 'secures the game's future'… *SunSport* columnist Harry said: 'It's a great relief to the game to get this deal in the bag.' England defender Rio Ferdinand added: 'It's great Sky will show all the drama of the Premier League for another three years.' Richard Bevan, chief exec of the League Managers' Association, said: 'Sky's investment has revolutionised viewing.'"

– News report in the *Sun*, 5 February.

Gandalf **Peaches Gandalf**

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£40m Cash ITV is hoping to save by sacking 1,000 staff, largely from its news division

£55m Cash ITV had to pay out this year to founders of website Friends Reunited, which it purchased for £120m in 2005 and is now desperately trying to sell

HIRST AMONG EQUALS

THE *Eye*'s much-followed-up revelation last November that Damien Hirst had threatened legal action against Cartrain, a 16-year-old who used an image of one of his works in a collage series (see *Eye* 1224), has had some interesting consequences.

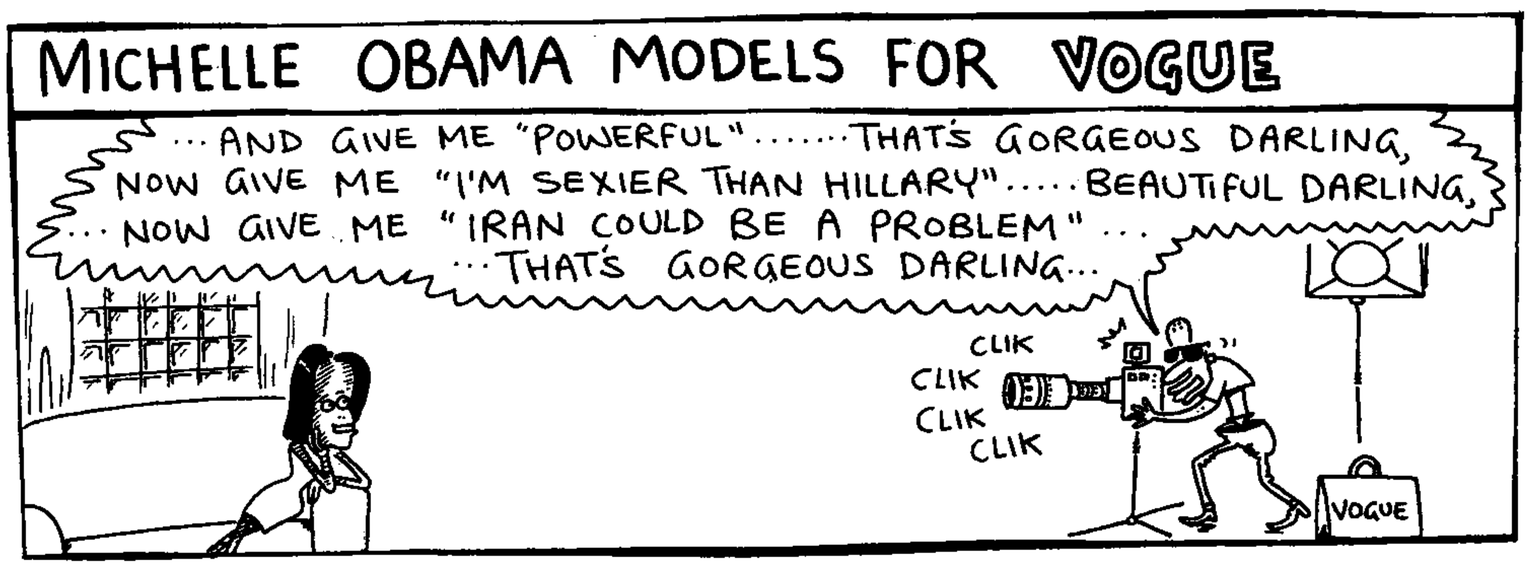
The bejewelled skull in question, known as "For The Love of God", has now been appropriated by several rather better-established artists in a deliberate attempt to annoy the shark-bothering bully.

Website redragtoabull.com features a collection of works by James Cauty, Jamie Reid, Billy Childish and John LeKay, who has in the past accused Hirst of ripping off his own work, all of which are for sale. The initial intent was to help Cartrain "get back the 200 quid that this Hirst allegedly nicked off him", but the site has been such a success it now has rather more grandiose intentions.

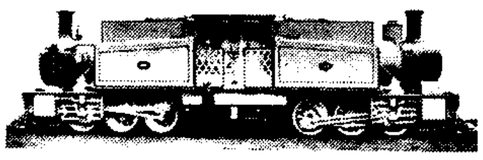
"Once TWENTY MILLION POUNDS has been raised ALL the proceeds will go to make an exact copy of a sculpture known as 'For the Love of God'. This will then be sold for FIFTY MILLION POUNDS and the THIRTY MILLION POUND profit will then be used to repay the Street Urchin his 200 quid, help other Street Urchins and also feed starving children in Africa and Sussex."

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



SIGNAL FAILURES



Blight at the end of the tunnel

THE Metronet consortium collapsed in 2007, four years after taking over London Underground infrastructure at Gordon Brown's insistence. But its legacy of waste and incompetence remains.

Metronet handed work to its shareholders, including Bombardier which got £3.4bn of contracts for new signalling and trains. To save on designing all-new trains for LU's idiosyncratic "sub-surface" lines (Metropolitan, District, Circle, Hammersmith), Bombardier adapted a standard product. The upshot will be longer trains than today's; but enlarging sidings, some stations and Neasden train depot to match will be difficult and expensive (for taxpayers, not Bombardier).

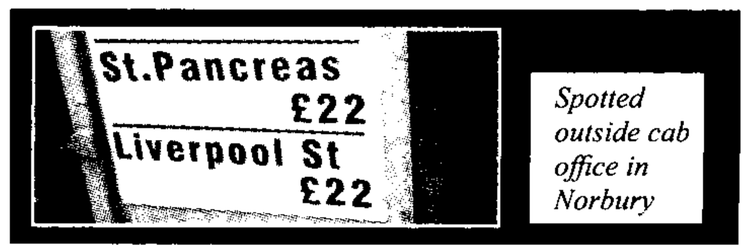
Uniform interiors were another penny-pinching feature. Today's Circle trains have wide areas for standing and few seats, to carry crowds over short distances, while Metropolitan interiors were designed for commuters coming in to London from Buckinghamshire. Metronet's idea was to deprive some commuters of seats with compromise interiors for uniformity, although the trains couldn't switch lines because the Metropolitan ones would have eight carriages, the Circle six and the others seven. (Ludicrously Metronet reckoned on seven-carriage trains for the Circle Line, where sidings are built for six carriages.)

Metropolitan trains would inevitably lose some seats, as safety and access regulations dictate wider walkways between carriages. Metronet presumed its new signalling would support more trains per hour to compensate for the lost seats. Alas, the sub-surface signalling contract was a shambles and was scrapped last year. New signalling won't be available as new trains arrive over the next few years – so there will be no significant increase in trains per hour. Old signalling needs costly temporary alterations to make it work with new trains.

Last week LU announced that Chesham will have all-day trains to London from 2011. But the infrastructure limitations mean LU will have to halve its Amersham trains to two per hour to compensate. The Chesham-Chalfont shuttle must end because Metronet forgot the side platform at Chalfont is too short for a full-length train.

It remains to be seen how many new carriages can enter service before new signaling, and how many go into storage (another expense). New Metropolitan trains might start with one carriage removed. This, along with the standardised interiors, would cut seats per train by about 40 percent.

These are familiar themes across the railway as a whole. One reason west-coast mainline "modernisation" cost £9bn rather than £2bn was Railtrack's failed plan for new signalling for more trains per hour: old signalling had to be adapted unexpectedly. Railtrack's collapse in 2001 showed that infrastructure and operation shouldn't be split between separate companies; but Gordon Brown, then chancellor, dogmatically went on to force public-private partnerships on LU. Surprise, surprise – Metronet made massive investment decisions without understanding the basics of train operation. Railtrack's phenomenal inefficiency was bad enough in prosperous times: recessionary Britain can ill-afford more of Brown's PPP chickens coming home to roost.



Spotted outside cab office in Norbury

RICHARD BRANSON, who covets the east-coast rail franchise, reckons he can make financially troubled franchises as "successful" as Virgin's west-coast franchise. But who for?

Virgin hasn't paid the government a penny for that "successful" franchise. The Virgin-Railtrack upgrade plan proved hopelessly unrealistic and Beardie's "successful" franchise got wads of unplanned subsidy (*Eyes passim*). In 2007-8 Virgin Trains should have paid £152m (1997 prices) but got £162m subsidy.

Beardie's delivery on rail promises is at least consistent. Virgin was part of the consortium chosen in 1996 to build the Channel tunnel rail link, which would be mostly funded through increased Eurostar revenue thanks to Virgin's marketing magic. Eurostar didn't deliver the goods, Virgin was kicked out in 1998 and taxpayers funded the high-speed line. Meanwhile, Beardie won the CrossCountry franchise by promising to eliminate its subsidy by 2009. Virgin's plan was such a mess the CrossCountry network was slashed and given massive extra subsidy (*Eyes passim*); Virgin was booted out in 2007.

'Dr B Ching'

MEDICINE BALLS

More scope for improvement

Dear MD,

Thank you for highlighting the Shepton Mallet Treatment Centre (SMTC) issue (see last Eye*). The problems are not just with colonoscopies – just ask the consultant orthopaedic surgeons at Yeovil District General Hospital (DGH).*

There is subtle pressure on GPs to refer to SMTC, and patients are canvassed at home to try to change their options from DGH to SMTC. Shepton is so highly selective in its choice of patients (lowest risk only, even for procedures under local anaesthetic) that patients are often canvassed, seen, rejected and then have to go through it all again through the terrible "Choose and Book" system.

One of my patients ended up being transfused three units of blood after a routine hernia repair, while another had a horrendous wound infection. The problem with hips and knees is that you don't know that the operation has been substandard until it has not lasted the 15-20 years one would expect. I've anaesthetised my fair share of SMTC re-dos. In one arthroscopy, the DVD revealed they had missed the meniscal tear completely.

How many doctors have chosen to be treated there? If I injure myself skiing, I know where I'll not be going. I'd rather take my chance with MRSA and a surgeon I know about than have a nice view of the Mendips and post-op cup of tea on a doily...

Back in 2005, the Commons health select committee recommended that the same appointment procedures should be used for NHS hospitals and independent sector treatment centres (ISTCs), which includes vetting by the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS). However, BBC West health correspondent Matthew Hill contacted 41 clinical directors across the NHS, and 11 of them said the RCS was still not used to appoint surgeons in their local ISTCs.

The RCS, rather predictably, hasn't got much of a handle on the scale of the damage. As spokesman Mike Parker put it: "We are hearing there are definitely problems out there. They are many and varied. There don't seem to be so many problems when the surgeons working in ISTCs are the same that work in the NHS in the area. But where they are not, then sometimes there have been."

SMTC does use an RCS Fellow to help assess potential surgeons, and it appointed Dr Ben Mak, who had 25 years of experience as a surgeon and was qualified to perform colonoscopies in Holland. Dr Mak gave Joan Redfern the all-clear in 2007 but surgeons at the Royal United Hospital in Bath discovered a 6cm rectal tumour six months later, and Joy died from metastatic disease.

Dr Mak has resigned from SMTC and a review of his work by the Somerset PCT should be published imminently, but the NHS as a whole needs to enforce the same appointment procedures, training standards and performance management across the board. GPs used to have the power (and responsibility) to refer patients to where they thought best, but the choose-and-book system, coupled with the pressure PCTs are under to fill up empty slots in expensive prepaid ISTCs, has meant that more complex and higher-risk patients have been referred inappropriately to private centres.

I've yet to meet a doctor who has chosen to be treated in an ISTC. Is there anyone out there?

M.D.

ECO-GNOMICS

Tree stumped

WE EXPECT government and big business to get it wrong on the environment. But sometimes even environmentalists do little to cover themselves in glory.

Take the row now brewing among the green and the good over the baffling decision of Friends of the Earth to withdraw its support from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the oldest and most respected sustainable timber labelling and auditing body in the world.

FoE has said it is worried by reports that some FSC certificates fail to "guarantee rigorous environmental and social standards"; and it is supporting a review of the entire FSC scheme to see where it needs to be strengthened. Until such changes are identified and made, it says, it won't recommend the FSC mark.

To the dismay of most moderate campaign groups, the move appears to come at the behest of FoE chairman Simon Counsel, whose apparent vendetta against the FSC has united a coalition of voices against the FoE decision.

This matters because companies can now point to Friends of the Earth's withdrawal of support as an excuse for doing nothing on sustainable wood and paper sourcing. Worse, it opens the door for a range of cowboy "green" timber certification schemes that fall far below the FSC standard. If consumers see labels like FSC attacked by Friends of the Earth, who can blame them for not bothering to check the provenance of the furniture or paper they buy?

Tony Juniper, former head of Friends of the Earth, has already criticised the move by his former employer publicly; and Greenpeace and WWF are none too happy either. FSC, already weakened by years of political wrangling, finds itself having to defend its work while rampant logging continues across large swathes of south East Asia.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

PORT HOLE

COLIN PORT, chief constable of Avon & Somerset police, was not pleased when hacks in the West Country had the temerity to run stories questioning whether Southwest One, a £500m outsourcing "joint venture" between Knacker, Somerset county council and IBM, was really the terrific value for the taxpayer he claimed.

Questions have been raised about a lack of democratic accountability and transparency. In the Commons last year Bridgwater MP Ian Liddell-Grainger described Southwest One as "a mad, corrupt, barking scheme" forced through by the determination of Somerset council's chief executive, Alan Jones (*Eye* 1207). What really annoyed Port, however, was that anyone should dare suggest that there might be the teensiest conflict of interest involved because Southwest One's project director from Somerset council, Susan Barnes, also happens to be Mrs Port.

So he spent more than £90,000 of public money with Britain's greediest libel lawyers, Carter-Fuck, on a 12-month campaign to harass journalists investigating the deal with threatening letters. BBC West and local ITV hacks were frozen out by the force press office for months. ITV used the Audit Commission Act to discover that Port had run up legal bills of £92,269.94 last year with Carter-Fuck.

Port maintains that in spending the equivalent of four constables' salaries attacking hacks he was motivated by concern over "personal issues surrounding my wife" and was protecting "the safety and security of my family". The cost of any further Carter-Fuckery won't be known until August, when the authority is obliged once again to open its books. Then council taxpayers will be able to add up the latest incidental cost of "delivering services that represent value for money".

GILROY WAS HERE

EVEN Britain's highest-paid council chief can mess up sometimes.

Kent county council chief exec Peter Gilroy – who earns between £250,000 and £260,000 a year – is in bad odour with the council's Tory leader Paul Carter over an "e-bulletin" last month in which he told staff they were going to have to grit their teeth and accept a pay settlement of just 1 percent this year. Not that Gilroy and Carter disagree about the pay offer. So what's the problem – unless you happen to be a cleaner or teaching assistant struggling to make ends meet?

Carter is annoyed with Gilroy because, in an attempt to sweeten the pay pill for thousands of lower-paid staff, he revealed that "the highest paid of our colleagues, the chief officers group, have decided not to take any bonus next year in recognition of the financial situation we all face". Sadly the workers had not known, until Gilroy let it slip, that senior officers were getting bonuses in the first place.

ESSEX BOYS

TORY Essex council leader Lord Hanningfield, who is also Call Me Dave's shadow transport minister in the Upper House, appears to have a relaxed attitude towards expenses.

In 2007-08 he claimed a splendid £17,120 from the Lords for "overnight subsistence" in London – even though he lives just over 35 miles away near Chelmsford, to which there is a perfectly adequate train service. But Lord H clearly is not a frequent user of the train, for he only claimed £1,095 last year under the heading "rail/ferry/coach", out of total expenses of £38,884.

He does, of course, have a chauffeur-driven car, provided by the council taxpayers of Essex. And his chauffeur is listed as having a House of Lords pass. But as it would not be legal for Lord H to use his county council car for Lords business, he must be getting to London some other way. Perhaps he hitch-hikes.

Lord Hanningfield, in fact, seems to hand out Lords passes like sweets. Four other full-time Essex county council officers also have them: head of policy Brandon Hallam, Alex Corbett, who runs Hanningfield's office, and Kevin Howlett and Giles Roca, both PR-wallahs. It would of course be unlawful to use council officers for Tory party work in the Lords. Maybe they are just very interested in constitutional affairs.

SUPERMARKET SWEEP

YET another Tesco store is to open on the back of a planning study carried out for a council by a consultancy that does extensive work for… Tesco.

Communities secretary Hazel Blears recently overturned strong local objections to a new store in Tweedmouth. Initial approval by Berwick-upon-Tweed council had followed a report from planning consultants England & Lyle, who act regularly for Tesco elsewhere.

The case follows controversy across the border in Dumfries, where leading planning consultancy GVA Grimley advised the local council on a Tesco store application, duly approved, even though it too works extensively for the supermarket (and advises Blears' Whitehall department on planning policy to boot).

Councils employing conflicted consultants needn't worry. They can claim the support of the Audit Commission, which two years ago recommended using *more* private consultants. When it came to Tesco-type situations, the commission advised: "Where there is a potential conflict, the consultant should declare it in advance, in much the same way that councillors declare interests and therefore do not vote on some planning applications."

But whereas conflicted councillors must step back, consultants don't have to.

● **MEANWHILE, one in the *Eye* for Sara Randall Johnson, Tory leader of East Devon district council, whose cheerleading for a giant Asda which would have despoiled the beautiful Exe estuary was reported in *Eyes* 1148 &**

"Cheer up, it may never happen..."

1217. Last week Asda pulled out, citing the "economic climate". EDDC said it was "deeply disappointed". Residents, on the other hand, were delighted. Recession not all bad, then.

NUCLEAR OPTION

BACK in 1995 a public inquiry into proposals to bury intermediate radioactive nuclear waste in Cumbria concluded that two factors – unstable geology and the level of groundwater flow – made the venture far too risky. County councillors, whose concerns had prompted the inquiry, applauded this verdict. But now the ruling Labour group on the council believes the past should be buried along with nuclear waste.

Last November environment secretary Hilary Benn announced (unspecified) financial rewards for communities volunteering to store nuclear waste. There were few takers – save for Cumbria CC and Copeland borough council, home of the Sellafield nuclear plant, also in Cumbria. The neighbours are now squabbling over who should pocket that government dosh. This time Cumbria is volunteering to store high-level radioactive waste – far more unstable than the "intermediate" variety proposed last time.

Any hopes that the proposal may be subject to democratic scrutiny and voted down have been dashed by the ostrich-like behaviour of Cumbria's Lib Dem and Tory councillors, who have refused to work together. This has enabled the Labour group to form a minority administration where power rests with a five-strong cabinet – which has refused to debate the proposal. Power to the people? Only if it's nuclear!

WET AND RILED

CLOSURE of small community swimming pools up and down the country continues thanks to Labour's obsession with PFI.

Consultants have grown rich on taxpayers' money and local authorities have trousered millions in PFI credits by closing pools that, in nearly every case, would have stayed open had local people had a real say in the matter.

The procedure is fairly straightforward. First hire, at high cost, a consultancy firm such as Strategic Leisure to produce a report that "critically evaluates swimming provision" in council area X, Y or Z. Consultant produces report and concludes, as day follows night, that community-based pools should be closed and replaced with larger but fewer pools, usually in town centres.

Strategic Leisure told Rotherham metropolitan borough council that ten pools should be closed and replaced with four pools because "the customer base has been diluted [*sic*] through over-provision of swimming water". Kerr-ching! £15m of PFI credits to the council.

In the Wirral, three of six pools face, er, the plug being pulled, thanks to Strategic Leisure, which, having been paid £100,000, found there was a need for "more good quality water space".

Strategic Leisure has also been busy in Bradford and neighbouring Leeds, the city council has adopted what it calls "new leaf PFI". This will give it £30m of PFI credits on the back of the closure of six local pools against the promise of two new big ones. It's the same story in Croydon and elsewhere. Kerr-ching! Kerr-ching!

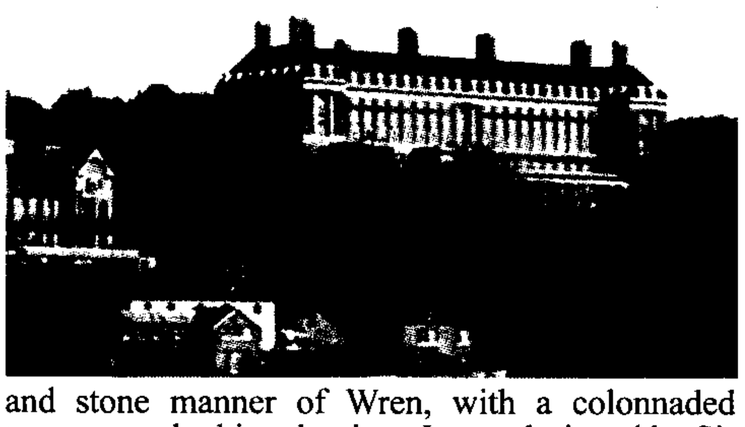
IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

OH I'M ALL FOR OPEN RELATIONSHIPS... WHY NOT BRING MORE PEOPLE INTO THE MÉNAGE?
WELCOME THEM ALL IN I SAY: MALE AND FEMALE, YOUNG AND OLD, ALL RACES... THE MORE THE MERRIER!
IT'S TIME TO TAKE THE SHAME OUT OF HAVING MORE THAN ONE NUTRITIONIST...
AND I'VE BEEN SEEING TWO ACUPUNCTURISTS FOR YEARS...
I NEED THE BATHROOM

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE Royal Star & Garter Home at Richmond was built to care for some of the many thousands of men who returned from the Great War shell-shocked, limbless or mutilated. The charity was founded in 1916 and one of the finest sites in London was purchased: the summit of Richmond Hill overlooking the Thames – a scene painted by Turner, among others.

Money was raised by the British Women's Hospital Committee under the auspices of Queen Mary who, along with King George V, opened the resulting Royal Star & Garter Home in 1924. This grand building is a magnificent essay in the brick



and stone manner of Wren, with a colonnaded terrace overlooking the river. It was designed by Sir Edwin Cooper – architect of the Port of London Authority building and the late, lamented Lloyd's in the City – who waived his fee. And now the board of governors wants to abandon it.

Although the Star & Garter Home has been successfully modernised internally over the years and no proper feasibility study has been carried out, the governors have decided it is "less and less suited" to meet changing needs – and, sadly, there is still a need for homes for disabled ex-servicemen. They claim that "the building is also expensive to maintain. In the long run we won't be able to afford its upkeep" – though as it is extremely well built, it is likely to be more economical to maintain in the long term than any modern replacement. And three modern replacements are proposed, scattered about the country.

One has already been built, at Solihull, in conjunction with the developer Barratt West Midlands. Another is proposed as part of the controversial development of the site between Hampton Court Station and the Thames (*Eye* 1033) which, despite the opposition of Historic Royal Palaces, has just been given planning permission by Elmbridge district council. The third has yet to be decided.

And then Cooper's magnificent building on its magnificent site will be flogged, perhaps to a commercial developer for conversion into luxury flats. Perhaps. But with the recession and the collapse of the property market, this must be uncertain – as is the future of the Hampton Court development.

What is proposed for the Star & Garter is typical of what has afflicted so many charities and institutions in the recent boom years. A clever-clever trustee who thinks he knows all about money persuades his colleagues the way forward is to sell off assets and to invest in new buildings, regardless of history, association and amenity – indeed often ignoring the real purpose of the organisation in his enthusiasm for a smart deal. And in this case, the asset is something very special which deserves rather more thought, and respect. For the Royal Star & Garter Home on Richmond Hill is not just a residential home; built and endowed by public subscription; it is also a war memorial.

AT LONG last the London borough of Southwark has imposed a compulsory purchase order – subject to confirmation by Hazel Blears, the communities secretary – on the owner of a long-derelict Gothic villa in Lordship Lane. Possibly designed by Charles Barry junior, architect of nearby Dulwich College, it is known as The Concrete House because its walls are, oddly enough, constructed of mass concrete.

Built in 1873 by Charles Drake's pioneering Patent Concrete Building Company, it is one of the earliest surviving concrete structures in London, and in Britain, and is listed grade II. The owner has applied to demolish this remarkable curiosity five times and is largely responsible for its present state of shameful ruin, with floors, woodwork and ornamental features stripped out.

In 2007, the Wandsworth council successfully prosecuted a developer who unlawfully demolished the former caretaker's cottage at Brandlehow School. This house was part of the primary school in Brandelhow Road built in 1950-53 which was one of two London schools designed by that greatest of modern British masters of reinforced concrete, Ernö Goldfinger, and is listed at grade II. The developer was fined £11,000 and told to rebuild the house according to Goldfinger's original drawings and specifications by November this year. Two months ago Wandsworth secured a high court injunction that if he fails to rebuild by the deadline he will be guilty of contempt of court and may risk a prison sentence and the seizure of his company's assets.

Now it is not just that useful but unfashionable building material, concrete, which links these two rather different maltreated listed buildings. 549 Lordship Lane was bought in 1996 by Birballa Chandra, who in 2000 sold part of the land to his associate Rajiv Laxman, who was then allowed to build a block of flats in the same style right next door on condition that he made the Concrete House habitable (which, of course, he has not done – but Southwark, stupidly, failed to record that a listed building was involved). Mr Chandra, Mr Laxman and the latter's company, Abrus Ltd, all share the same business address in Croydon. And Mr Laxman, the sole director of Abrus Ltd, is the developer who has been prosecuted by Wandsworth for the unlawful demolition of the Brandelhow caretaker's house and who, with any luck, will be imprisoned if he fails to rebuild it. It is a small world.

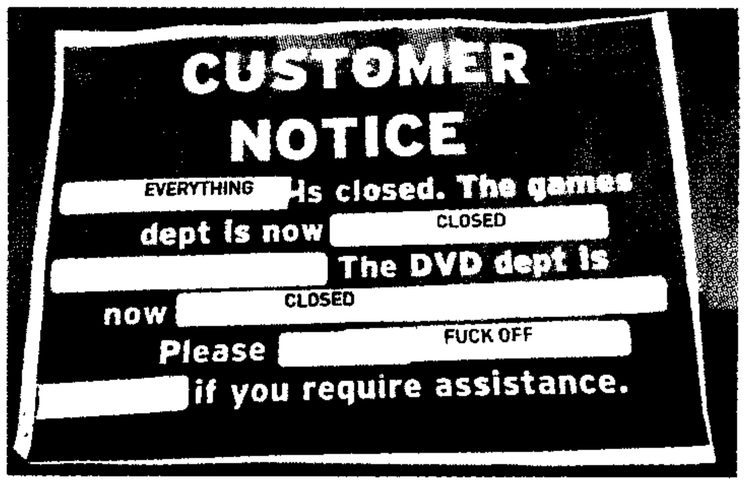
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Monumentally huge, dominating both landscape and insignificant humans, paid for by public money in these times of economic crisis...
MARK WALLINGER'S GIANT WHITE HORSE WINS LANDMARK PROJECT
It's just what we need to cheer us up!
Marvellous!
A snip at £2m!

I-SPY *Zavvi, Norwich*



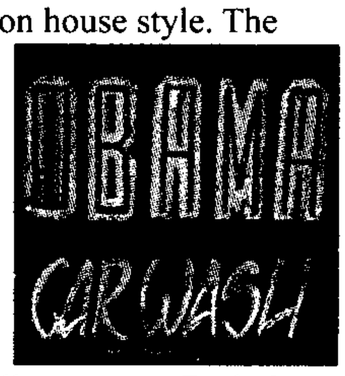
Submitted by Simon Dring.

Obamaballs

"INAUGURATE GREAT HEALTH WITH CHIROPRACTIC CARE: Celebrate the inauguration of the 44th American President. For the month of February, pay just €44 for an office visit." – ***Flyer from Imagine Health Clinic, County Kerry***

"President Obama. Pretty high on the list of things they said could never happen. And excuse the parallel, but so is the abolition of Key Stage 3 national tests." – ***Judy Moorhouse, Teaching Magazine***

"Barack Obama's inauguration as US president inspired Robertson Homes to slash £29,000 off their Washington house style. The four-bedroom property at Ayr's Kings Park is now just £269,000." – ***"New Homes" supplement, Sunday Mail***



"President Obama had a dream to be elected to the White House. Jewel & Esk College had the dream of rebuilding the College estate. Both the President and the College achieved their dreams. Like President Obama, the College needs astute, innovative and strategic leaders to make the dream work for its people. The College looks to recruit new Governors to help shape the future..." – ***Job Advert, Scotland on Sunday***

"Like President Barack Obama, how we speak move and communicate determines our success in life. Elocution and public speaking by experienced drama coach and former BBC staff producer." – ***Advert in Metro***

"At Barack Obama's inauguration he was pictured wearing a bright red spotted tie upon a crisp white shirt. Since then Thomas Pink has noted a huge increase in the sales of red ties, up by 30 percent in the last week. This comes as no surprise seeing as Obama picked the colour most associated with power and leadership. Thomas Pink has 35 different red tie designs to choose from this season." – ***Press Release***

"Barack Obama's inauguration influenced councillors at a budget meeting in Ebley Mill this week. Cllr John Marjoram (Green, Trinity) said 'Barack Obama spoke of a new era. And to a certain degree it is, looking at a new era of how we invest our money.' Meanwhile Cllr Janet Wood (Independent, Coaley and Uley), mentioned him during her fight to save one-off community grants. 'One of the most conspicuous features of President Obama's speech was a bid to restore moral authority to the American nation,' she said. 'I think Stroud District Council can learn a thing or two from him'." – ***Stroud News and Journal***

PRIVATE eyePLAYER

● HEAR Ian Hislop, Harry Enfield, John Sessions, Lewis MacLeod, Jan Ravens, Richard Ingrams and Craig Brown reading from the Private Eye Annual 2008 live on stage at the Lyttelton Theatre with the brand-new eyePlayer at www.private-eye.co.uk

Letters

Gaza rockets

Sir,

As the person who resigned from the BBC Appeals Advisory (AAC) committee over the BBC's decsion not to screen the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Gaza Appeal, I would like to make clear that my reason for resigning was not as a quick reading of Media News might suggest, because the committee "had no involvement in the process".

That is not the AAC's role, but it is the main purpose of the DEC which provides a transparent mechanism for international charities to debate and collectively decide on national media appeals.

I resigned because not content with overruling the DEC's recommendation, which was based on long established criteria, the Director General compounded this poor decision by "hiding behind impartiality" and impugning the integrity of the DEC by implying it had not acted impartially.

I doubt any viewer who saw the actual appeal on Channel 4 would have seen it as politically biased or adversely affecting that broadcaster's reputation.

The ultimate logic of the purported policy of avoiding appeals arising out of politically controversial conflicts would be for the BBC to ignore major humanitarian crises altogether.

Sadly, this spurious argument seems to have persuaded "Remote Controller" to buy into the spun idea that emergency appeals have only ever been shown in cases where the cause is politically neutral or where "no reasonable person could defend the aggressors".

This is not strictly accurate. I seem to recall Private Eye raising concerns about the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia in the aftermath of Live Aid in the 1980s. The 1971 appeal for Bangladeshi refugees in the midst of a war at the start of which Bangladeshi independence was not yet recognised by the UK would not have been seen by some (including of course supporters of the aggression), as "strictly neutral" either.

And in 1982, the BBC broadcast a DEC appeal fronted by a well known BBC journalist (Sue Lawley) for Palestinian and Lebanese victims of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, when the stated purpose of that invasion had been to drive out the PLO, which was not then recognised by Israel.

Sincerely,
NIAZ ALAM,

London E17.

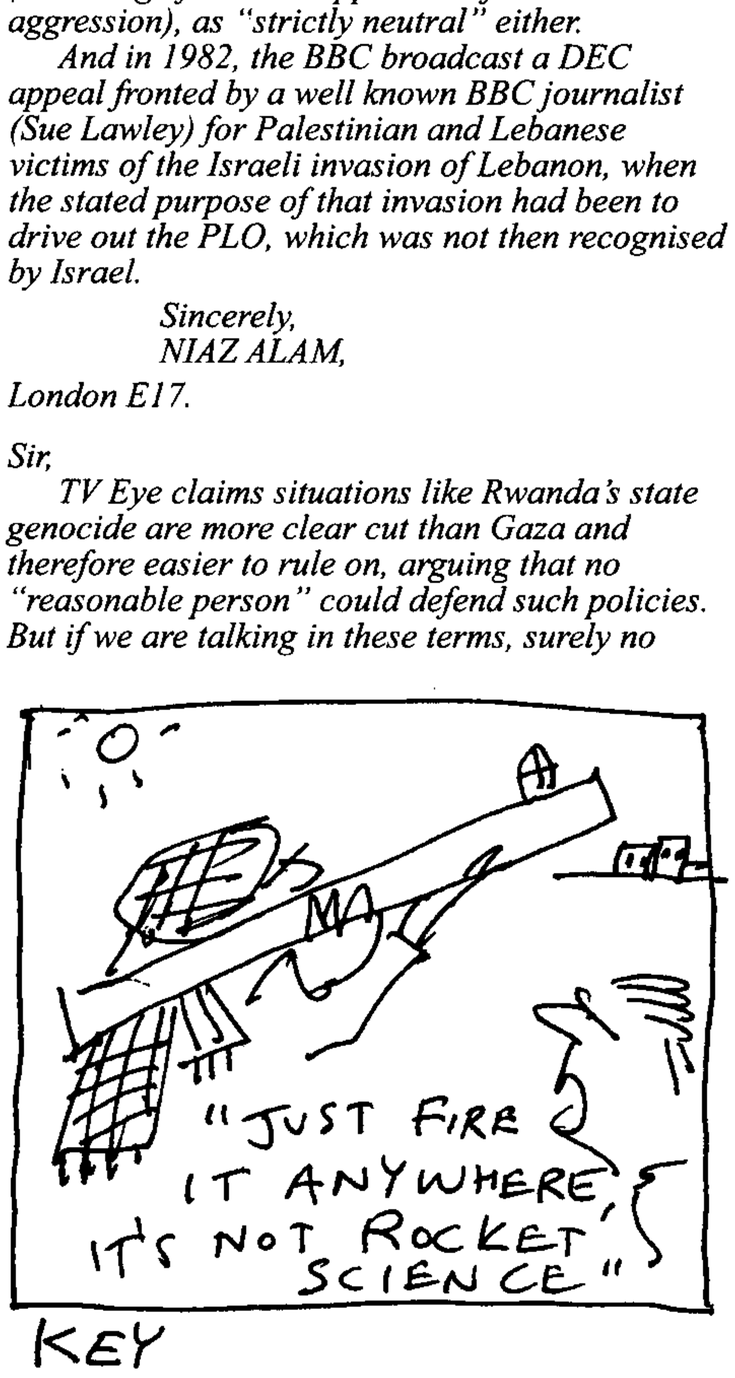
Sir,

TV Eye claims situations like Rwanda's state genocide are more clear cut than Gaza and therefore easier to rule on, arguing that no "reasonable person" could defend such policies. But if we are talking in these terms, surely no reasonable person would interpret a broadcast on behalf of the victims of a humanitarian crisis as a statement in favour of one side or another. And if there were such people, would we wish the BBC's policies to be based on placating them rather than treating all victims of crises equally?

How would TV Eye (Remote Controller, Eye 1229) explain to Palestinian children facing disease and starvation why we can't give them the funds they need? "Sorry son, you're a victim of the wrong kind of disaster"?

CATHY COOPER,

London.



Sir,

I am not at all surprised by the reaction of the traditional supporters of Israel to the cartoon (issue 1228) highlighting the disproportionate casualty figures in the recent Israeli attack on Gaza, but I am extremely disappointed that Private Eye saw it fit to dignify an absurd piece of propaganda – or "hasbara" in Israeli lingo, if you wish – by publishing a letter claiming that a doctor in Shifa Hospital said that the majority of the youth slaughtered by Israel where Hamas recruits! Come off it, even Israeli human rights watch has deplored the atrocity of the innocents.

Yours faithfully,
SAMI JOSEPH,

Aylesbury, Bucks.

Panel beating

Sir,

Remote Controller moans too much (Eye 1229) about Question Time from Fort William including Westminster parliamentarians from three parties and an MSP. The woman from the Lib Dems he derides was the most effective panellist of the evening. Too often the panels are padded out with obscure academics and editors, even of a satirical magazine, who speak for nobody except themselves.

LAWRENCE FULLICK,

Bournemouth.

Hair shirt time

Sir,

I am puzzled by Eco-Gnomics' blanket condemnation of the Pure London fashion event (Eye 1229). For example, what's wrong with wool garments designed and produced in Britain? Doesn't the local production reduce the carbon footprint of manufacturing and avoid sweatshop production in distant poor countries, two of Eco-Gnomics' greenness tests? Not to mention the possibility of creating local jobs. A shame there were no hair shirts on show.

Yours,
NOAM BERGMAN,

Oxford.

Freudian slip

Sir,

In your enjoyable coverage of the Alexander Lebedev Evening Standard saga, you overstate the role played by PR smoothie Matthew Freud. You say that I reported "the Standard could take a softer and perhaps more progressive line" "after a briefing from Freud". In fact, I didn't speak to Freud. It was Lebedev who told me that he wanted to change the Standard's editorial direction because, as he put it, it was "floating in the tide of the Daily Mail".

As for the British media's "drooling coverage" of Lebedev this has little to do with Freud. It has everything to do with the fact that Lebedev is co-owner of Novaya Gazeta, the courageous Russian newspaper whose lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova were shot dead in Moscow last month.

Yours,
LUKE HARDING,

The Guardian, Moscow.

Lookalike I

Golly

Stephens

Sir,

Don't know if you spotted it on Tuesday night's BBC News about Carol Thatcher's "offensive" golliwog comment, but the guy they wheeled out to condemn her cruel comments (some human rights lawyer, I think [Mark Stephens. Ed.]) had the most perfect vertical hair, starting halfway back on his head.

If ever anyone had hair like the famous strawberry jam maker it was this guy, and he was saying how bad it was for her to describe people as golliwogs.

We just howled!

Regards,
DAVID YOUNG,

Via email.

Lookalike II

Doll

Thatcher

Sir,

I cannot help but notice the uncanny resemblance between Carol Thatcher and a rag doll.

I think that the Iron Lady owes us an apology.

Yours,
SANDY GEMMILL,

Edinburgh.

eBay watch

Sir,

Several years go I found this badge on eBay and, considering the current round of "Beat-Up-A-Thatcher" is currently taking place, I thought it quite ironic.

Note the milk bottle, handbag and pearls.

Yours non-offensively,
JONATHAN ROLAND,

Manchester.

Snapper snaps

Sir,

I was somewhat bemused to read in "Street of Shame" of my sacking from the Daily Express by Richard Desmond. I found it especially strange as I was shown the article by a colleague from the back bench while I was doing a night shift on the picture desk of the Express some weeks after the alleged event. But congratulations are due to you as f the article reached a new low in lack of accuracy and personal abuse even for the Eye. If you replaced your snide comments about my weight with say, the word black or Muslim you probably would have been liable to get your collar felt by Inspector Knacker. But as it is, we will just have to put you down as a bunch of sizeist creeps. On the matter of accuracy, what happened was that Richard who had been talking to me on a couple of previous days in a far from offensive manner about weight loss and health made a joke about my reading the papers at the start of my shift and I later had words with Peter Hill about it.

Nobody was called a "Fat Cunt" and nobody was sacked. And as it happens when I worked through the strike I did not get "Pots of Dosh" I got paid the normal rate for the job I did and I'm not a NUJ member. Also, I felt that a strike would do more harm than good and in this I have been proven right. One phone call could have set matters straight but where, for you, would have been the profit in that? You wold rather it seems, publish the vitriolic outpourings of one of the apparatchiks than be accurate, how very sad.

Some years ago I gave a few stories to Paul Foot (and you neglected to pay the agreed fee for the pictures). In those days your writers were top rankers. Now it would seems you are something that rhymes with ranker and I don't mean merchant bankers.

PAUL STEWART,

Via email.

Trigger happy

Sir,

Your report in Eye 1229 on the succession of elaborate and unreliable mechanisms for firing the Warrior's cannon and machine guns has me baffled. Have I missed something or are the Powers That Be unable to see the obvious? There is a simple and very well-tried system for making guns go off when you want them to and not when you don't – it's a little lever known as a ***trigger****. It has the great advantage of being attached directly to the mechanism of the weapon and thus not depending on telephone cables, bungees, string and pulley arrangements or anything else. The photograph accompanying your report actually shows such a lever in use.*

If this is too simple for the technocrats they could employ me as a PR consultant to give it a more impressive label – something like Solid Lead Projectile Digital Release System might do. I'm sending my bill for consulting fees to the MoD today.

Yours sincerely,
R.N. RICHMAN,

Ringwood, Hants.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

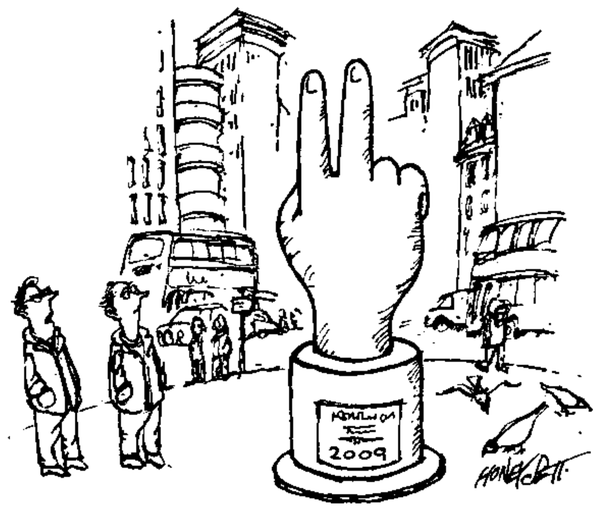
I have been reading much about investors and economies from various countries "de-coupling".

Do you have any photos from happier times showing in-vesters coupling?

CHEE SING WOO,

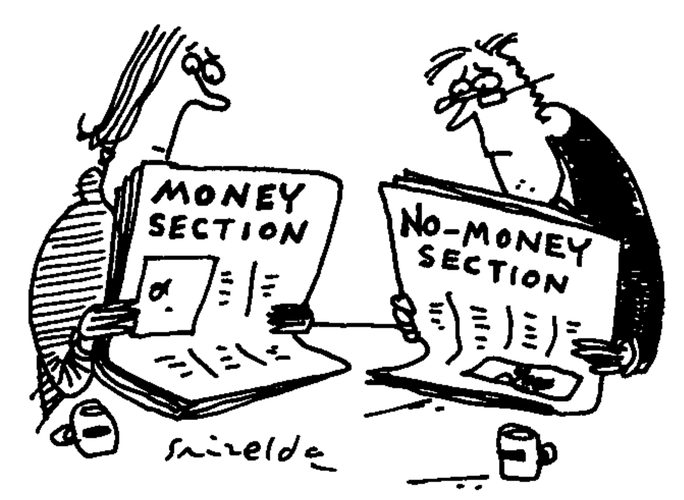
Hong Kong.

CARTOON CRUNCH



"Being the major sponsor, I think the bank had quite an influence on its design"

"You know how you hate your job? Good news – you no longer have it"



Blind faith

Sir,

I couldn't help but raise a wry smile at Ratbiter's (Eye 1229) criticism of "whacky practitioners of alternative medicine" and their treatments that "share a common absence of double-blind trials which can prove to the paying customers that they actually work". Most patients attending their local GP's surgery don't ask their doctor for the results of double-blind trials when they receive their prescriptions. Nor do most doctors ask to see them when, hard pressed as they are, they receive yet further lavish literature promoting the benefits of the latest wonder drug from the drug company.

All of these drugs are subject to double blind trials, yet often problems do not appear until well after the drug is released upon a trusting and unsuspecting public. Sometimes fraud plays its part because companies have so much money invested in the production of the drug. Often, the double-blind trials fail to take account of the very real differences of individuals' reaction to such drugs, so their potential dangers are only spotted well after release.

Double-blind trials? I'll stick with my homoeopath!

KEVIN MORRIS,

Bradford.

PS. Didn't know the editor had started policing demonstrations! ("China Protest" photo, Eye 1229).

Witch report

Sir,

As head of the Union of Cackling Old Witches (UK section), I am writing to protest in the strongest terms about the highly offensive Heath cartoon on page 28 of the current issue, which depicts a Cackling Old Witch preparing homeopathic potions.

This is a serious slur on the reputation of all Cackling Old Witches. Homeopathic remedies consist of nothing but water and are entirely ineffective; whereas we take great pride in producing concoctions containing very high levels of frogs' legs, newts' eyes and other actual, testable ingredients that have real effects. In fact, if any UCOW member were found cheating the public with homeopathic brews, she would be instantly and summarily relieved of her cauldron, cat and broomstick.

Please publish a correction forthwith.

GERI CORVUS,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"These are unprecedented scenes we haven't seen in years."
MIRANDA SCHUNKE, GMTV
(Anon)

"That hot pistachio cake was wonderful, so unctuous and delicious."
JOHN TORODE, BBC2
(Jane Kelly)

"Viewers in some regions were still able to see substitute Dan Gosling's goal just seconds before it happened..."
BBC News website
(Jessica Gooch)

"No one is guilty until proved otherwise."
LORD WINSTON, BBC1
(Peter Hay)

"He [Robbie Keane] was like the cat that got the cheese."
STAN COLLYMORE, TalkSport
(Zach Brown)

Pedantry Corner

... With humble apologies, can I be the first of the same 13,264 pedants to correct my mistake? (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1229). I unfortunately copied an error in my source reference to cuckoo clocks. The first such clock belonged to the Prince ELECTOR August von Sachsen – not Prince "FLECTOR" – as any (including myself) German speaking fule shud kno.

ROGER CROSTON.

... Sorry to spoil Mike Barfield's Fridges (Eye 1229) but APPARENTLY Walt Disney was cremated – whether or not his ashes were deep frozen is, of course, another question.*

JEFFREY HORWICH.

*They weren't; it was a popular urban myth. Ed.

... Re your 'First Drafts' cartoon in issue 1229. Had your cartoonist Simon Pearsall done his research, he would have discovered that a coffee table book about coffee tables was, in fact, originally conceived by Cosmo Kramer in an episode of the US sitcom Seinfeld, originally aired in 1994. Not only did his coffee table book feature pictures of coffee tables, but it also had four legs which folded out, turning it into... a coffee table! This theme was picked up in 2003, when a coffee table book about you-know-what was published (and written and compiled by Alexander Payne and James Zemaitis if you're interested).

Back to the drawing board!

Keep up the good work.

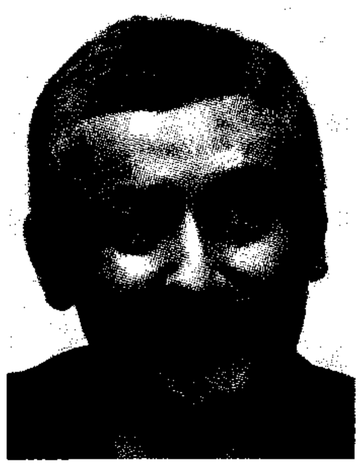
MICHAEL CHARALAMBOUS.

... May I be the first of not many to point out that it is actually the A44 that bifurcates Chipping Norton, not the A40 as you egregiously suggested in your coverage of White Hell Blitzes Blizzard Britain in Eye 1229?

As a point of fine interest, you might note that the almost parallel Banbury and London roads leading out of "Chippy" both have the A44 designation, meaning that we are in fact trifurcated by this particular route, contrary to my earlier suggestion.

A. RHODE-BOAR.

Lookalike



Davis

Goodwin

Sir,

I wonder if in his many private jet flights with Sir Fred Goodwin, Lord Gnome has noticed how uncannily he resembles that master of the green baize, Steve Davis. Perhaps he will also have compared their abilities to pocket everything they can and snooker everyone else.

JOE DONNELLY,

Via email.

Polite society

Sir,

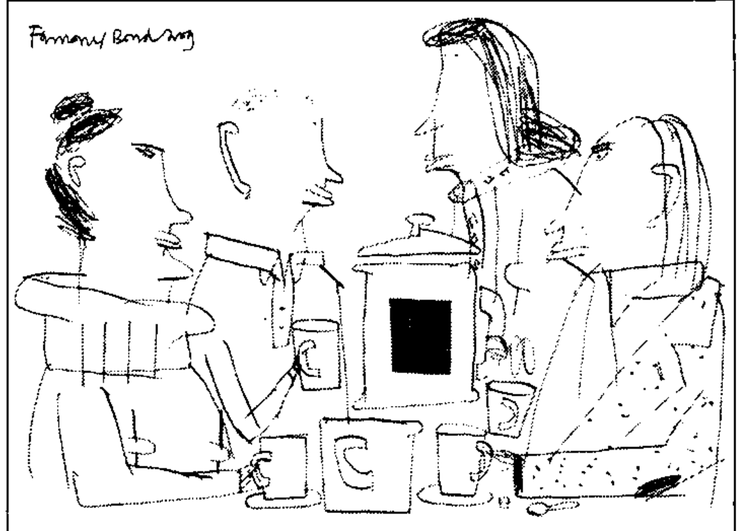
You lot dun know nuffin! Your Yobettes are very different to mine ("I know and I'm not wearing any knickers either", Eye 1229). The ones of my acquaintance always use a double negative ("I'm not wearing no knickers").

Best wishes,

JANE KELLY,

London W3.

Scenes You Seldom See



"We've run out of instant coffee. Does anyone mind real?"

Pseudo Names

... So enjoyed the little diversion with all those clever people making up silly names. We needed that in these dark and difficult days. And so upset when it was to end.

M.T. FEELING.

... Please don't stop them, if you do I'll jump.

SUE E. SIDAL.

Your readers should be ashamed of your obsession with made-up names.

MS R.E. GUTZ,

Enough!

COLLETTA DAY.

... Great to see you haven't given in to the whingers and continue to delight us with Pseudo Names. We especially like the international mix of the correspondence.

ATTA BOYKI
PAM CUMMING.

... We are two Liverpudlian sisters, one of whom has a lively sense of humour and enjoys all the funny names, whereas the other just can't see the point.

LAURA & NORA LORRALAFFS.

... Re: Crossword. Is it me or is your resident cruciverbalist starting to lose the plot? The ruse of using infantile made-up names taken from your letters section as answers really does take the biscuit.

Yours,
FORD HOWNE,
JUAN ACROSS,

Via email.

... I have been dithering about whether to join your Pseudo Names correspondence for several weeks. Am I now too late?

DILLIE TANTAY.

... By now there must be quite a waiting list for those with Pseudo Names to get their letters published in your organ. To pass the time while we wait, do you think you could include a puzzles page, please?

SUE DOUGH-QUEUE.

... Whichever edition finally brings an end to these ridiculous names, Oh Lord, I want to be in that number.

WENDY SAINSCO-MARCHENIN.

... As a very regular reader of your magazine for more years than I care to remember, I have a splendid idea for you – get people to write in with made-up names. Now, bet you never thought of that one!

AL ZHEIMER.

(No. It wouldn't work. Ed.)

Letter from **Madeira**

from Our Own Correspondent

WITH our cake, port and hardy island mentality, Madeira, an outcrop in the Atlantic and an autonomous region of Portugal, conjures up old-fashioned images and old-fashioned values. Our fondness for the traditional way stretches to our politics and a bygone era when leaders were no-nonsense characters who knew how to get things done.

Dr Alberto João Jardim is such a man. He has been in power for 30 years (a little behind Colonel Gadaffi but just ahead of Robert Mugabe). As a young man he was an ardent supporter of the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal and wrote propaganda for its army, then fighting dirty wars in Africa. He was against multiparty democracy but these days Madeira is, at least constitutionally, a part of modern Europe and ours is an elected leader.

For this Dr Jardim praises what he calls our "superior people"; our blissfully few difficulties being the product of a "satanic triangle" between what passes for an opposition, the independent press and the English, who long ago controlled our economy.

A place as special as Madeira needs a special kind of democracy. Thus our public prosecutors recently decided not to pursue a case against a violation of election laws on the grounds that the violations weren't serious enough. Opposition speaking times in parliament have been cut three times in the last year, provoking one opposition deputy to raise the Nazi flag in protest. The president (who is executive head of government) only goes to parliament once a year to get the budget approved. On this occasion, he answers no questions and speaks for an unlimited time, during which he insults every member of the opposition, one by one. The Spanish paper *El Mundo* calls Jardim "El Maestro del Insulto".

But why bother with parliament when one can speak directly to the people? In one year, Jardim managed to preside over 450 official openings: a roundabout, 100 metres of new road, any number of white elephants. The ruling Social Democratic Party has a policy of supporting an ambitious public works programme; and who better to deliver on so many of such contracts than a clutch of building firms and one of the island's biggest suppliers of cement, in which, coincidentally, Jaime Ramos, the party's general secretary, is a prominent shareholder! He is also a treasurer of the party's foundation, which owns 40 or so buildings on the island, used as party offices and conference centres. The foundation also owns land in the mountains which served as a landfill site. Symbolically it is now being converted as a space to hold, er, political rallies.

Madeira's publicly owned newspaper, the *Jornal*, officially undercuts its rivals with a cover price of just 10 cents, but in practice is handed out for free thanks to the generosity of the taxpayer (€3m a year) and the advertising departments of government ministries and agencies, who contribute €500,000 annually. The paper toes a consistent editorial line, as might be expected when only Jardim's closest party allies are allowed to write opinion pieces.

The president, with no sense of irony, sees himself as something of a "godfather" figure, recently exhorting his party's youth wing to be a mafia "in the good sense". When João Carlos Gouveia, the leader of the main opposition party, raised the issue of corruption in parliament, the majority passed a motion to have his mental faculties examined. Opposition MPs promptly walked out in protest – leaving the president's supporters to vote through 17 motions in a mere 15 minutes!

When Cavaco Silva, the Portuguese president, visited last year, Jardim warned that he should not attend parliament because it was filled with lunatics. Accordingly Cavaco received opposition delegations in a hotel room. He concluded his visit observing that Jardim's regime was a "model democracy".

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "When we launched our latest advertising campaign," a spokesman for the Pascha brothel told reporters in Cologne, "we didn't really expect anyone to take up the offer. Free entry and free drinks for life might sound like a bargain, but we didn't think any men would be prepared to have our brothel's name tattooed in large blue permanent letters on their arm, which was what we were demanding in exchange. However, our plan has backfired, because more than forty men have already accepted our offer, and our tattooist is having to work double shifts. Poor man. There are long queues forming outside his room every night."

With over 120 prostitutes housed in a twelve-story building and attracting over one thousand customers a day, Pascha is reputed to be Europe's largest brothel. "We offer other discounts," the spokesman continued, "such as half-price sex for pensioners in the afternoons, but this is proving to the most expensive campaign we have ever launched. As well as free entry and free drinks, this latest deal includes discounts on lap dances, but the men will still have to pay full rate for the prostitutes, because they are self-employed and independent from the brothel."

Later, customer Herbert Manske proudly displayed his tattoo to photographers and said "It's a perfect deal. My wife doesn't mind, I get free drinks all night, and I can look at all the pretty girls. You have to do something crazy in life at least once, and this is it for me." *(Money Week, 21/11/08. Spotter: Michael Plumbe)*

– ● –

● *"The intruder alarm at the PNC Bank in the Skillman section of Montgomery Township went off at 8:40pm," Somerset County Prosecutor Wayne Forrest told a press conference in New Jersey, "and police officers responded to the call. The bank was closed and had its blinds drawn, but officers caught a glimpse of a menacing-looking shadowy figure inside, so they immediately took appropriate action.*

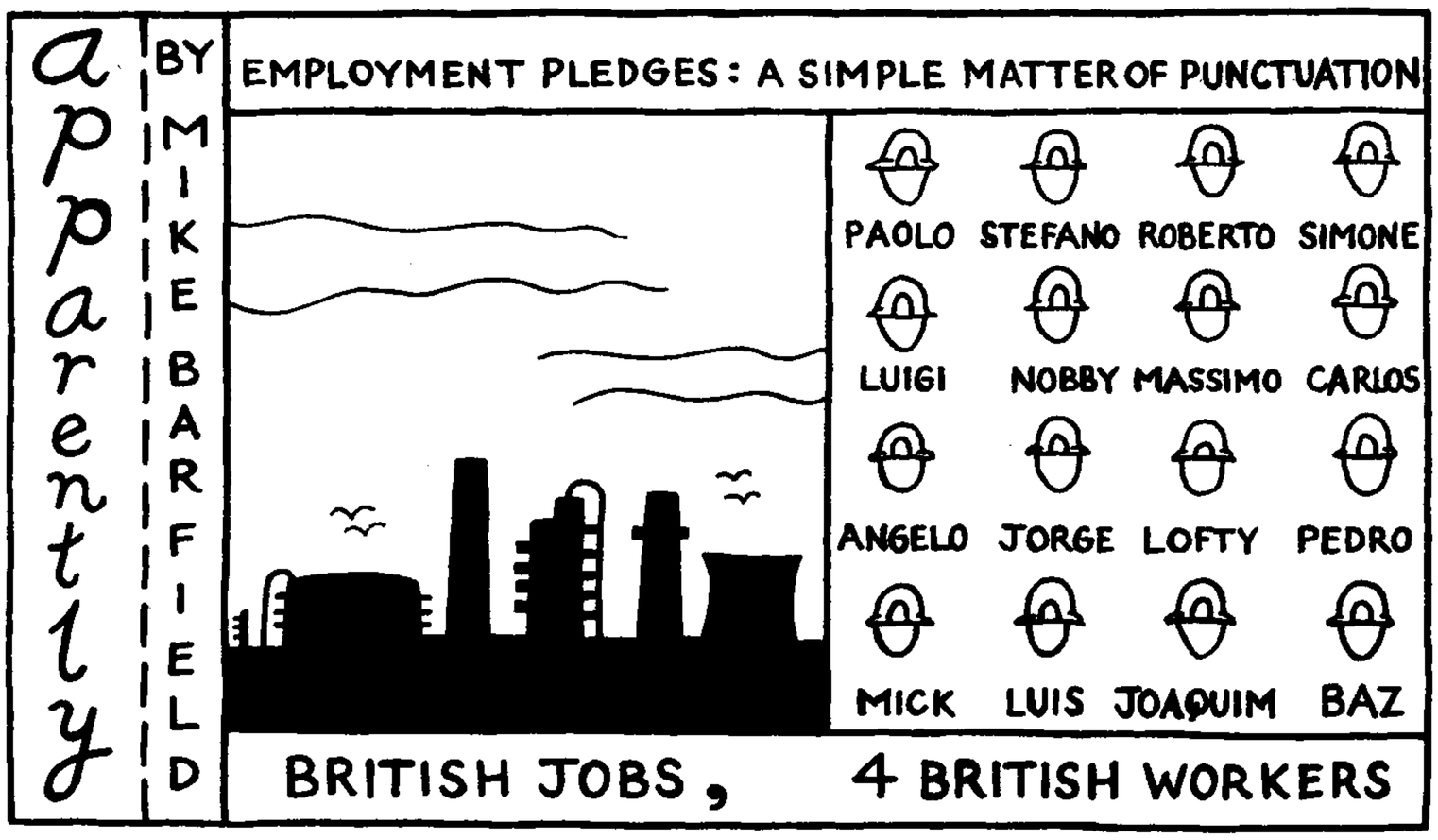
First, they called out a SWAT team, sealed off the entire area between routes 518 and 601, and evacuated residents from three nearby apartment buildings. They then used bullhorns and telephones to make contact with whoever might be in the building, but elicited no response. After almost two hours, the SWAT team decided to storm the bank, and finally succeeded in gaining entry shortly after 10:20pm. Inside, they discovered that the bank was empty, and that the shadowy suspect they had seen was in fact a cardboard cut-out of a salesman, offering low-cost finance deals to customers." (Star-Ledger [New Jersey], 27/11/08. Spotter: Mal Function)

– ● –

● "Essentially, increasing levels of national obesity are to blame," a spokeswoman for the ambulance service told reporters in New South Wales. "Australians are now amongst the most obese people in the world, and the four existing planes used by the Flying Doctor service are no longer always able to cope, especially in remote and rural areas. Each of the two larger planes we will be purchasing will be equipped

with much stronger stretchers, able to carry patients weighing up to 573 lbs, which is nearly twice the current limit of 308 lbs, while the planes themselves will be able to carry a total weight equivalent to that of a small elephant. Other parts of the service, including ground ambulances and helicopters are also being replaced with vehicles that can accommodate much larger patients."

Acting Health Minister Ian Macdonald added "it is alarming to consider that the number of Australians who are obese has increased so much that special equipment is needed to lift those in a medical emergency to safety. This country is associated with an active healthy lifestyle and a love of sport, but the reality is very different. This should be a wake up call to the community to watch what they eat by cutting down on fats and sugars, and increasing how often they exercise." *(Famagusta Gazette, 4/1/09. Spotter: Fraser)*



twitter

stephenfry
Hard to believe, I know, but I'm stuck in a lift again. Not Centre Point this time though.
About 1 hour ago from tweetie

Alone this time too. Arse, widdle and poo.
About 1 hour ago from tweetie

Hmm, that rhymed. I rather like that.
About 59 minutes ago from tweetie

As I am in the land of our American cousins, I suppose I should say stuck in an "elevator".
About 58 minutes ago from tweetie

What shall I do?
About 57 minutes ago from tweetie

@Wossy I know what I'd do Stephen, I'd get me knob out and wave it about.
About 56 minutes ago from TwitterBerry

Now, now, Jonathan.
About 55 minutes ago from tweetie

To get stuck in a lift once may be regarded as unfortunate, to get stuck twice looks like carelessness, as someone whose name escapes me might have said.
About 52 minutes ago from tweetie

@alantitchmarsh I'm having a cup of tea, Stephen. Imagine you're having one in a nice china cup, that'll calm you down.
About 49 minutes ago from the web

@kathylette Most men think vagina is what you bring out when the Queen comes to tea.
About 49 minutes ago from automated TweeterQuip

@Wossy I know what I'd bring out if the Queen came to tea – my knob. It's fucking enormous.
About 48 minutes ago from TwitterBerry

@alantitchmarsh Or a cappuccino perhaps.
About 46 minutes ago from the web

@kathylette Most men think think cappuccinos are Italian trousers from the Boden catalogue.
About 46 minutes ago from automated TweeterQuip

Ho hum.
About 40 minutes ago from tweetie

Anyone know how long one can survive by drinking one's own urine? I'm not sure I have any.
About 38 minutes ago from tweetie

@Wossy You can drink mine Stephen – straight out of my knob!
About 37 minutes ago from TwitterBerry

I was on my way out for supper. I should be drinking a non-urine-based aperitif right now.
About 32 minutes ago from tweetie

@kathylette Most men think aperitif is what you take out to give a blowjob.
Sent 32 minutes ago from automated TweeterQuip

Bum.
About 19 minutes ago from tweetie

I would like to send my love and sympathy to all our Australian cousins who are suffering with the terrible bush fires.
About 16 minutes ago from tweetie

@kathylette Most men think you start a fire in the bush by turning up with a bunch of wilting flowers and a cheap box of chocolates.
Sent 16 minutes ago from automated TweeterQuip

@carolthatcher Hello there! I'm new to all this...um... this isn't live is it...oh golly...
About 2 minutes ago from the web

Clinkers and stoolwater!
About 1 minute ago from tweetie

Advertisement

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Nursery Times

Friday, February 20, 2009

'WE'VE DONE A GOOD JOB' CLAIMS DUKE OF YORK

by Our Military Staff **General Retreat**

THE Commander of British forces in Operation Hill told the *Nursery Times* today that everyone could be proud of what his men had achieved in their recent deployment on the hill.

"The effort required in reaching the top of the hill was considerable but well worth it in terms of what we have achieved. We leave the hill in much better condition than we found it."

On other pages

● Cow Collides With Satellite Dish in Moon Jump **2**

● Eggs Not Good For You Says Humpty's Wall **3**

● Golliwog Loses Job **94**

Those Israeli Election Results In Full

Armageddon North

Livni Letdie *(Smiting For Peace Party)* 4,703; **Menachem Beginthewaragain** *(More Smiting And Less Peace Party)* 4,406; **Rabbi Solomon Ben Looni** *(Build More Walls Now/ Even More Smiting Alliance)* 2,304; **Letzbi Frenz** *(Socialist No Hope Of Winning Party)* 12. *(No change)*

Jericho South

Louis Armstrongstein *(Trumpeters Against Walls)* 13; **Rabbi Satchmoses** *(cont. p. 94)*

"No, it can't be... it's got to be left"

Is 'Thatcher' An Offensive Term?

YES says Mark Thatcher

I'll never forget the first time a playground bully came up to me at school and taunted me with a word that still haunts me to this day – "Thatcher". Soon everyone at school was calling me a "Thatcher" behind my back. It's impossible for people who haven't been called a "Thatcher" to understand how hurtful and damaging the word is. I blame everything that has ever gone wrong in my life on that offensive word.

NO says Carol Thatcher

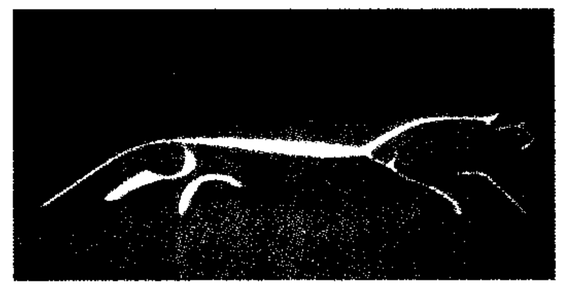
Come on, people need to lighten up a bit. Yes, okay, when I was growing up nasty people would shout "Thatcher" at me. So what? I'd just laugh it off.

I'd never let a word ruin my life. A few silly people calling me a "Thatcher" wasn't going to stop me doing what I wanted in life.

From the dizzy heights of "I'm a Celebrity" to the "One Show", it's pretty easy to see just how much this "Thatcher" has achieved.

NEOLITHIC TIMES

Protests Greet Giant White Horse Plan



How it will look

BY OUR ARTS STAFF BRON ZAGE

ENVIRONMENTALISTS were up in arms last night after plans were unveiled to create an enormous image of a white horse on the downs above the Berkshire village of Uffingham.

"This is an outrage,"said local cave-dweller Ugg Sewell, who called the horse "a grotesque eyesore which will completely ruin the view. With its ridiculously minimalist daubings, it doesn't even look like a horse.

"Quite frankly, a child of five could have done it better."

But local community leaders were enthusiastic about the design. Local councillor Wayland Smithy told the *Neolithic Times*, "I can confidently predict that the Uffingham White Horse will be a terrific tourist attraction and will still be drawing crowds of visitors to the area in thousands of years' time."

What's your view on the Great White Horse Debate? Chisel your opinion now (flint on sandstone please) and send via pterodactyl to the Editor, Alan Ugsbridger.

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 38

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

I regret to inform you that your Supreme Leader has been betrayed. Unbeknownst to us, we have been harbouring a viper in the innermost circles of the Party hierarchy.

Step forward Comrade Sir James Crosby, whom I personally singled out only months ago to become one of my closest advisers, charged with overseeing the long overdue reconstruction of the British economy.

I chose Comrade Crosby because he was a universally respected figure in the banking industry who was therefore ideally equipped to sort out the catastrophic mess which bankers such as himself had brought about when I wasn't looking.

Comrade Crosby assured me that no one could have been expected to foresee the collapse of Western capitalism, least of all myself and himself.

It now turns out that on 23 February 2006, Comrade Crosby was sent an email by one of his employees warning him that Western capitalism was about to collapse, due to the greed and stupidity of capitalist bankers such as himself.

Criminally, Comrade Crosby chose to ignore this very clear warning and furthermore sacked the employee responsible for the email, accusing him of an "irresponsibly negative attitude".

This exposes an unforgiveable error by Comrade Crosby. It is quite clear that he should have informed me immediately of the shocking news that the days of boom-and-bustism were not over, after all.

Had he done so, I would at once have been in a position to take decisive action and the crisis would thus have been averted.

As it was, Comrade Crosby allowed me to promote him to a very senior position in our Financial Services Apparat, where he could continue undermining the British economy from within.

Comrades, I can tell you that I have never before been so angry, except possibly when I saw on the television the sight of our discredited former leader, ex-Comrade Blair, grovelling to my friend Comrade President Obama at a so-called "Prayer Breakfast" in Washington, where he indulged in a sickening display of repulsive sycophancy combined with nauseating and insincere religiosity.

At least Comrade Crosby had the decency to fall on his sword, unlike the cowardly charlatan Blair, who continues to cavort around the world stage, causing intense embarrassment to the Party, to the entire nation and, above all, to myself.

Yours,

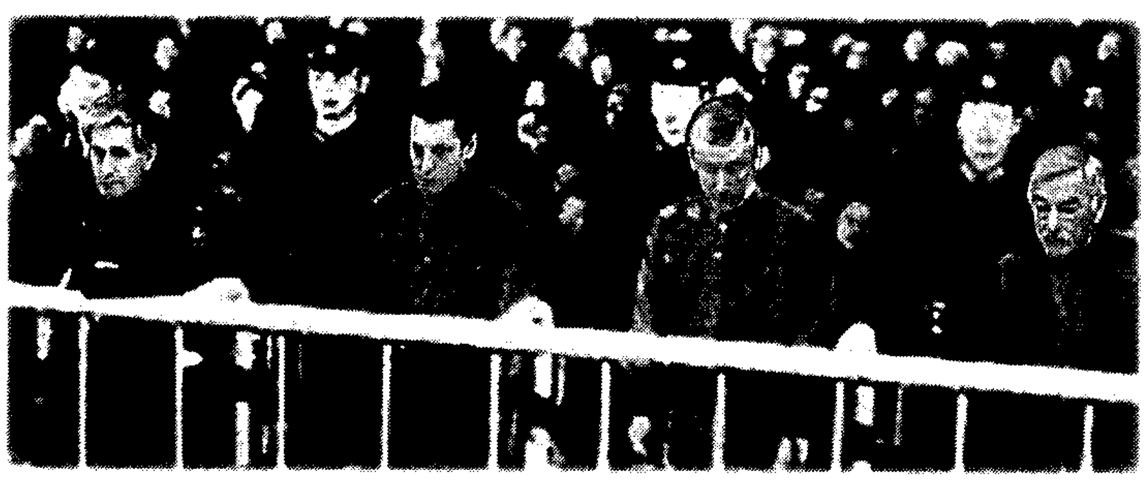
Gordon Brown

Supreme Leader

"There is only one senior Scottish figure in charge of Britain's banking system who does NOT need to apologise – and that is myself!"

Taken from The Little Brown Book, Chapter 94 (or possibly Chapter 944 or Chapter 9444, the figures are not important G.B.)

Bankers' Conspiracy



Show Trial Opens in Westminster

Comrades across the nation will have gazed in horror and disgust at the sight of the hated "Gang of Four" bankers, publicly confessing their errors in front of a tribunal composed of People's Representatives.

One by one, these maggot-parasites, who had been gorging themselves on the rotting flesh of the capitalist system, abased themselves before the tribunal, as with trembling voices they read out their statements in which they admitted that they had done nothing wrong.

Just listen to their recitals of their crimes against the People.

Comrade Lord Stevenson (ex-Chairman of HLOSS): I wish to make the most sincere and profound apology to this Committee for any errors I may have made due entirely to the global meltdown which no one could have seen coming, particularly not myself.

Comrade Lord Shred of Wheat (ex-Chairman of ROBS): I wish to say how profoundly I regret my many errors as chairman, which resulted in the loss of a great deal of money by a great many Comrades, not the least of whom was myself when the share price collapsed, my bonus disappeared and I got the boot (sob).

Comrade Andy Pandy (HLOSS): I profoundly regret having to appear before this Committee and I am deeply sorry that I have been put to all the trouble of coming here today to answer all these impertinent questions about my salary and well-earned bonus, the exact size of which is not in any way your concern.

Comrade Sir Jock McCockup (ROBS): I am very, very sorry for whatever it is that I have been asked to say that I am sorry for, and hope that we can now get on with the important task of rebuilding my conservatory after the damage it suffered at the hands of the recent "snow event". (Surely "rebuilding the British economy after the damage it suffered at the hands of the bankers"? Ed.)

What a picture of abject contrition these pitiful confessions conjure up!

One after another we saw these one-time "masters of the universe" grovelling before the nation, as they admitted some of the gravest crimes ever committed against the British people – crimes which, as they made abundantly clear, were solely and entirely their own responsibility, and nothing to do with myself at any time or in any way whatsoever. G.B.

Gordon Brown

An Apology For Our Previous Apology

IN RECENT WEEKS we, along with other newspapers, published an apology to the Prime Minister, Mr Gordon Brown, for suggesting that he was a financial incompetent who lacked the basic economic skills even to run a retail outlet purveying whelks.

In our apology, we were happy to make it clear that we regarded Mr Brown as a financial genius who had saved the world, and we withdrew all our previous allegations.

In the light of this week's news, we would now like to apologise for this apology, recognising that Mr Brown is by no means a financial genius as we suggested but is, on the contrary, a financial incompetent scarcely capable of a career as a vendor of shellfish.

FREE DVD WITH PRIVATE EYE

Hilarious b/w comedy starring
JAMES 'BING' CROSBY and GORDON 'BOB' HOPELESS

This time the hapless duo try to find the fabled 'Road To Recovery' but end up falling into a bottomless pit.

Don't miss Dorothy Lamour as Hazel Blears.

Songs include *In The Red Christmas, Gone Missin' (£1000 billion)* and *Who Used To Be A Billionaire.*

To obtain a free copy of this DVD simply collect 52 tokens from the next two years' Private Eyes and send with cheque for £34.99 to Private Eye DVD Offer, Unit 417, Charles Darwin Trading Estate, Sittingbourne, Kent CT5 8WW

Recession Watch

Good News Continues To Signal Disaster

ECONOMISTS say the news that house prices have risen for the first time in a year and retail sales were up in January are the clearest signals that the recession is gathering pace at a frightening speed.

"It has to be said that these figures are frighteningly good," said Roger Spectacles from the Institute Of Talking To Sophie Rayworth On A Big Screen, "and there is no clearer indicator of a rapidly deteriorating economy than figures showing that bits of the economy aren't rapidly deteriorating after all." *(Reuters)*

"It's the flight of banking talent..."

HEADLINES 'GLOOMIEST SINCE YESTERDAY'

by Our Economics Staff **Phil Job-Centre**

BRITAIN's headlines were officially declared as "depressing" after they had been gloomy for two quarters running.

"Yesterday's headlines were lowering enough," said a Treasury spokesman, "but today's have hit a new level of misery.

"The fears are that tomorrow's headlines will be the worst since records began," he continued.

"There are no signs of less depressing headlines and it may be years before we see any sort of recovery in *(cont. p. 94)*

Those Depressing Headlines In Full

Recession Worst Since 1980s, says IMF

Recession Worst Since 2nd World War, says CBI

Recession Worst Since 1920s, says Treasury

Recession Worst Since Black Death, says Balls

Recession Worst Since Dark Ages, says Darling

Recession Worst Since Great Flood Destroyed Life on Earth, says Mervyn King

Government Worst Since Beginning of Time, says everyone

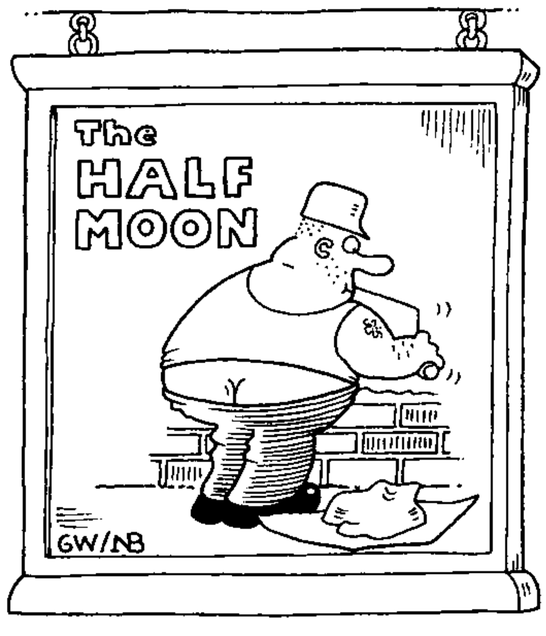
Downturn Glossary

A Recession is:
Two quarters of negative growth in the economy.

A Depression is:
Four quarters of negative growth in the economy.

A Great Depression is:
Two halves of the England football team.

MODERN INN SIGNS



THE TIMES (ROMAN)

VENERIS, FEBRUARIUS XXII, AD XXXII

CHRISTIAN PUNISHED FOR SAYING PRAYERS WHILST HEALING SICK

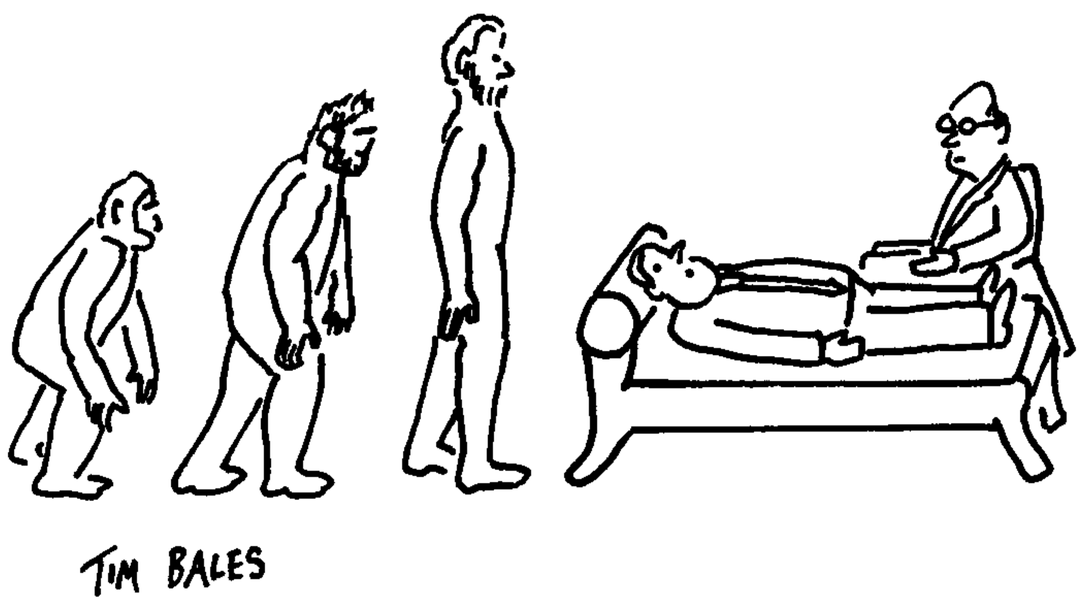
by Our Health Staff **Phil Istine** and **Sam Aritan**

A MIDDLE-AGED Christian man who offered prayers to accompany his healing mission was yesterday reprimanded by the authorities.

Mr Jesus Christ, 32, was alleged to have used prayer "inappropriately" on a number of occasions including incidents involving leprosy, blindness, and resurrection from the dead.

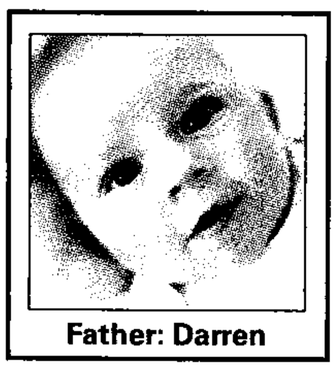
Said Mr Pontius Pilate, Head of the Regional Authority, "This is a pagan country and you really should keep your Christian beliefs to yourself."

Mr Christ was then suspended on a cross outside the city and *(That's enough blasphemy, Ed.)*



BABY HAS FATHER WHO IS YOUNGER THAN HE IS

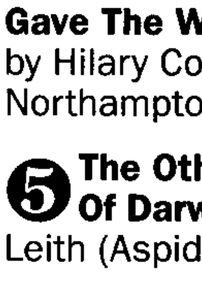
by Our Broken Britain Staff
Max Clifford Hastings


Father: Darren

IN A shocking indictment of modern-day Britain, a baby was born yesterday to a father who is *(cont. pp 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 94)*

TOP 10 BESTSELLERS

Non-Fiction



1 TV's Charles Darwin – The Greatest Genius Ever by Sir David Attenbore (BBC Books, £38.99)

2 Darwin's Bicycle – The Naturalist As Cyclist by Jolyon Voletrouser (Oxford University Press, £48.99)

3 Lady Laetitia Starborgling – The Secret Life of Darwin's Third Cousin by Professor Norman Beamer (Virago Press, £29.99)

4 Darwin's Northamptonshire – The County That Gave The World Evolution by Hilary Corby (University of Northampton, £58.99)

5 The Other Beagle – A Life Of Darwin's Dog by Sam Leith (Aspidistra Books, £9.99)

6 Darwin At Shrewsbury – The Evolution Of A Public Schoolboy by Michael Charlesworth O.S. (St Cakes' Press, £19.99)

7 Darwin's Love Poetry, edited by Daisy Darwin-Peabody, Darwin's great-great-grand-niece (Amethyst Press, £11.99)

8 Stephen Fry's Darwin by Stephen Fry (BBC Books, £19.99)

9 Darwin's Beard by Christopher Howse (Beaver Books, £25.99)

10 Was Darwin Jack The Ripper? by Colin Wilson (UFO Press, £28.99)

(That's enough Darwin books. Ed.)

All these books are available from Gnomazon for 3p

"Love the no taste"

BORIS IN F-WORD SHOCK

by Our Clean-up Politics Staff
Michael Whitehouse

THE Mayor of London, Mr Beano "Boris" Johnson, was today revealed to have used the "F" word on no fewer than 10 occasions in the course of one jaw-dropping outburst.

It occurred inside County Hall when an attractive woman walked past the Mayor's office when he was busy swearing at Keith Vaz on the phone.

Here is the full transcript of Beano's extraordinary tirade.

Beano: Now look here, Vaz *(Mayor looks out of window)* Fwoar!!! I say! Ding dong! Fwoar! Hel-lo! Fwoar! Fwoar and triple Fwoar!! Crikey and cripes! Fwoaarrrrrr with brass knobs on!!! Is it me or is it getting a bit hot in here? Fwoar! Blimey! Think I'll just take the bike out for a little ride down the corridor!? Fwoaaarrr! Don't go away...

The Mayor's office denied using "a fwoar-letter word" and a spokesman said, "Mr Beano was merely trying to do his job of telling Keith Vaz to fuck off".

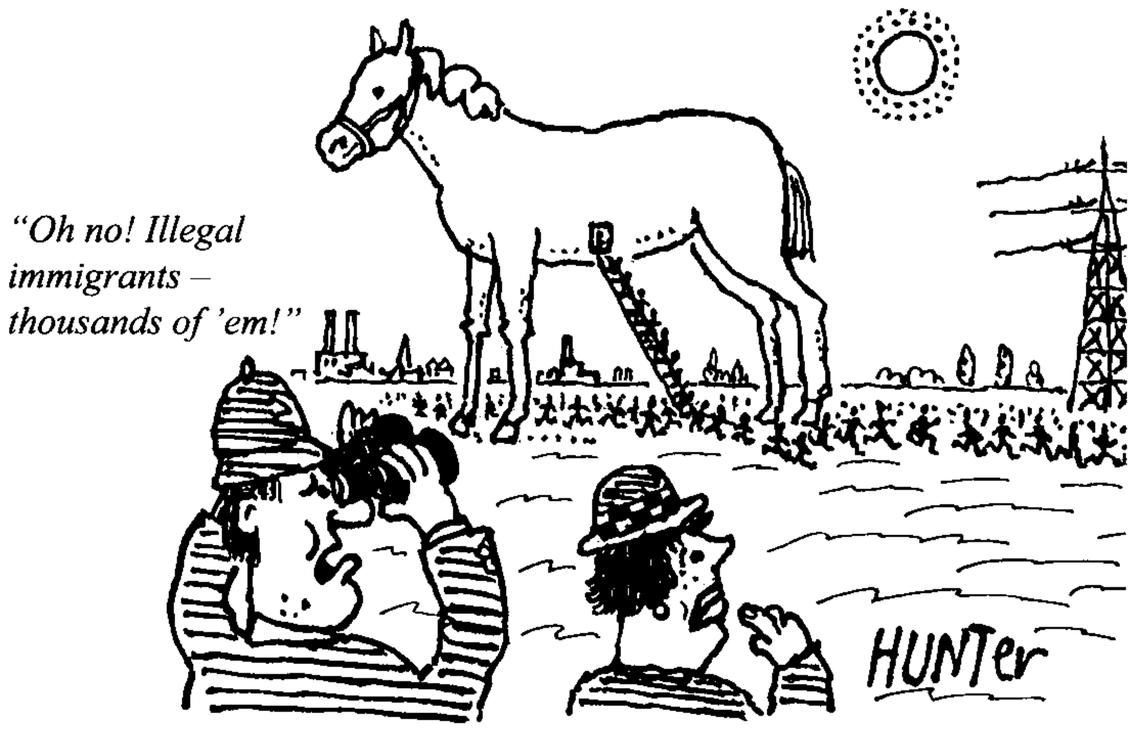
The victim, Jason Brown, 36, suffered a deep wound to his head after being attacked by the clock on Market Hill, at the top of George Street.

Luton News

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD

YOU CAN SAY WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT THE MODERN GAME...
BUT I BELIEVE THAT THEY DESERVE EVERY PENNY THEY GET...
LET'S FACE IT, IT'S A CAREER THAT DOESN'T LAST VERY LONG
YOU'RE RIGHT, THANK GOD WE'RE PLAYERS!
ONLY 4 PREM MANAGERS HAVE HAD THEIR JOB FOR OVER 3 YRS



Ms Jade Goody

Yet Another Apology

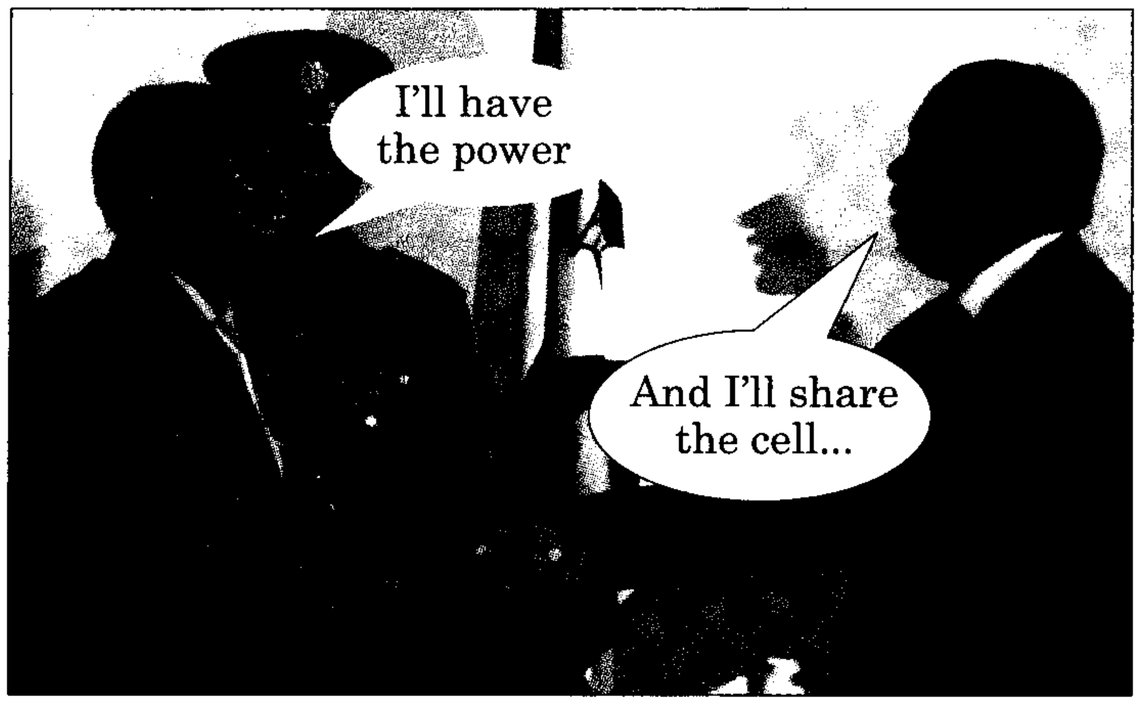
IN RECENT YEARS, in common with all other newspapers, we may have given readers the impression that we regarded Ms Jade Goody, star of the reality televisual entertainment series *The Big Brother*, as an unseemly figure of fun, ill-educated and harbouring unpleasant racist convictions. Headlines such as "Drop Dead You Ugly, Fat Racist Pig!" may have reinforced readers' belief in our negative view of Ms Goody's character.

Now that she *is* about to drop dead, we would like to put on record that no offence was intended by our earlier remarks. On the contrary, we would like to make it clear that we have always regarded Ms Goody as a courageous young woman and a warm-hearted iconic role model for the nation's youth.

We recognise that her recent engagement is further evidence of her sterling qualities in the face of adversity, and this is reflected in our moving 94-page supplement "Till Death Us Do Part – Brave Jade Says 'I Do' With Last Breath".

We would like to apologise to our readers for any distress that may have been caused by our previous comments.

POWER-SHARING AGREEMENT



SYNOD BANS C of E MEMBERS

by Our Religious Affairs Correspondent
B.N. Pee

THE Church of England Synod today passed a motion that no members of the C of E should be allowed to remain as members of the Church.

'The C of E," said Synod delegate Kevin Spart, "is a notoriously non-inclusive, judgmental and discriminatory organisation which, under the guise of being loyal to the Queen, is full of right-wing bigots... er..."

Supporting the motion, Mrs Gwyneth Dimwiddie of the Peterborough and West Fenland Birdwatchers Association, said, "It is not uncommon to see churches flying the flag of St George, which is deeply offensive to other faith communities, such as Moslems, Scientologists and members of the Hari Enfield sect.

"What is more," she continued, her voice rising to a low drone, "many of these vicars wear black shirts to symbolise their crypto-Fascist role as agents of homophobic extremism."

The motion was carried by a majority of 4,076 to 3.

Cakes and tea were then served by Mrs Mosley.

Advertisement

GNOMEBY'S
NEW YORK

Unique sale of Gandhiana
Formerly the property of the late Mahatma Gandhi

LOT ONE
Gentleman's toothbrush. Ivory handled with elephant bristles.
Some wear and tear.
Estimate $1 million

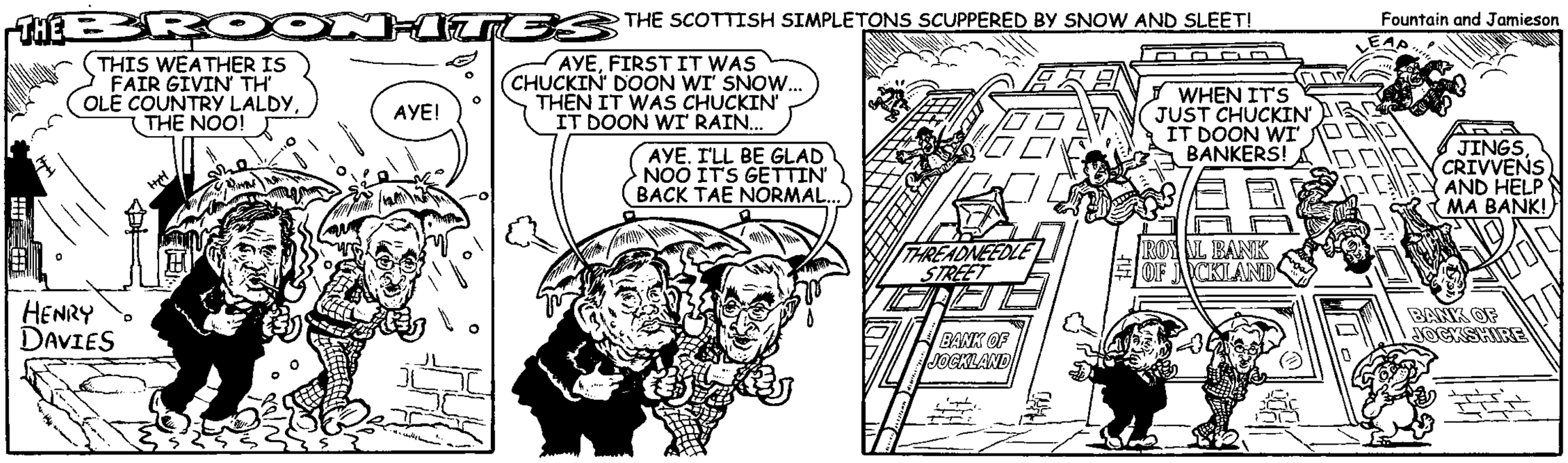
LOT TWO
Pair of gentleman's braces. Tartan design with brass adjusters.
Stamped 'Montague Cohen of Bangalore"
Estimate $2 million

LOT THREE
Gentleman's Wellington boots. Size 9, Lovat green rubber with felt lining. Left boot has small hole in undersole but otherwise v.g.
Estimate $3 million

LOT FOUR
Gentleman's iPod player. Mp3 device. Excellent condition. Hardly used.
Estimate $4million

GNOMEBY'S
NEW YORK

Bid Your Money Goodbye!


THE BROON-ITES
THE SCOTTISH SIMPLETONS SCUPPERED BY SNOW AND SLEET!
Fountain and Jamieson
THIS WEATHER IS FAIR GIVIN' TH' OLE COUNTRY LALDY, THE NOO!
AYE!
HENRY DAVIES
AYE, FIRST IT WAS CHUCKIN' DOON WI' SNOW... THEN IT WAS CHUCKIN' IT DOON WI' RAIN...
AYE. I'LL BE GLAD NOO IT'S GETTIN' BACK TAE NORMAL...
LEAP
WHEN IT'S JUST CHUCKIN' IT DOON WI' BANKERS!
JINGS, CRIVVENS AND HELP MA BANK!
THREADNEEDLE STREET
BANK OF JOCKLAND
BANK OF JOCKSHIRE

DRAWING ALL FAITHS TOGETHER

A Letter From Our Founder And Spiritual Leader, the Rev. Imam Rabbi Sri Tony Blair

Hi!

As you may have seen, I was deeply honoured and privileged to be invited to President Obama's inaugural prayer breakfast at the White House in Washington.

Just imagine, a former vicar of St Albion's parish here in England being the very first world spiritual leader to be called to eat waffles and say "Hallelujah" at the table of the Rev. Martin Luther Obama.

And given this opportunity to preach the word, what was to be my message to this awesomely distinguished gathering including Sister Oprah Winfrey, Mr Waldo Walmart and Mr Snoop Doggy Dog (check names, please!).

The chief thing I had to tell my very old friend Brother Barack was how important it is for a politician to make clear at all times that he is acting under the guidance of Almighty God.

In all my years running my little parish in England (before my mission went "global"!), I always insisted to those around me in the vicarage how vital it was to "do God".

I well remember one of our parish team, Mr Campbell, who used to edit our parish newsletter, saying to me, "Vicar, watch it, you scumbag, or people will think you're a f***ing lunatic".

How wrong he was! If anyone was a f***ing lunatic, it was him, as numerous psychiatrists could testify!

But, as I said at our historic prayer breakfast in Washington, as I passed a plate of hominy grits to the lovely Michelle, "You must have .God on your side in everything that you do".

This means that, when it all goes wrong, you can blame God – not that it did ever go wrong in my case, because everything I did was right.

Michelle then asked me what I thought about her husband's predecessor, the Rev. Dubya of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons.

I had to confess that I didn't know who she was talking about – and when I had repeated this three times, a nearby rooster crowed a resounding cock-a-doodle-doo. A good omen, surely.

When I had completed my address, which the congregation apparently found "deeply inspiring" (so much so that many of them broke off open-mouthed from their plates of hash browns and "sunny-side up" eggs to listen), Brother Obama thanked me for my witness, saying, "Praise the Lord, for a great prophet has come among us, to preach the message of Daft-ism to all the nations.

"Rev. Blair, you have set a shining example of moral leadership which us humble mortals can only hope to follow."

I don't mind admitting that I was very moved by this unsolicited testimonial from the world's most popular and powerful human being.

And, at this point, I pulled out my trusty guitar and sang a chorus which I had composed specially for the occasion.

"There's nothing odd, odd, odd,
About doing God, God, God.
We're all in his squad,
squad, squad,
So give him a nod, nod, nod,
And put this song on your
iPod, Pod, Pod."

I am happy to say that there were many people in tears by the time I had finished, and more than one of them was generous enough to approach me afterwards to say, "If only you were our President and spiritual leader, how much happier we would be."

I could only agree with their kind words.

Rev. T. Blair

Chief Executive, D.A.F.T.
(former vicar of St. Albion's)

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

LOOK BANKERS - IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE...
...LIKE I DO WHEN MY MAN BRINGS ME MY FIRST CAPUCCINO OF THE DAY... MMMP!
SO GET REAL! THESE BONUSES ARE TERRIBLE! IN FACT THEY'RE SO TERRIBLE...
...THEY'RE A BIT OF A BONUS FOR US!
SALE
HURRAH FOR UNPOPULAR BONUSES!!!
YES, WE KNOW HOW GHASTLY BANKERS ARE!
BECAUSE THEY'RE OUR BEST FRIENDS!
OOPS, EH, READERS!?!
'APPEN - T'GORDON IS ACCUSING US OF DOING NOWT
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
SO WHAT ARE WE DOING?
WE'RE LAUGHING AT GORDON! HAW! HAW! HAW!

'NO TORTURE COVER-UP' SAYS MILIBAND

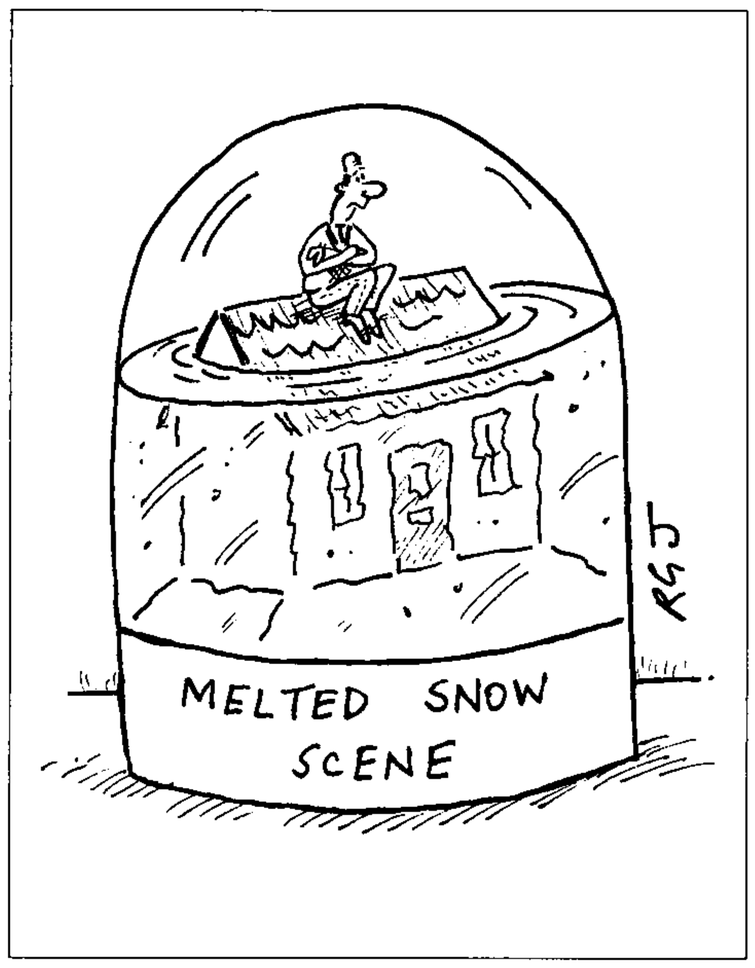
by Our Rendition Staff **Phil Cells**

THE Foreign Secretary, Mr David Miliband, denied that the Americans had twisted his arm over the use of torture on terror suspects.

"I don't know what you are talking about," he said, "I am being very well treated. The Americans are very nice indeed. They are giving me everything I want while I help them with their cover-up... I mean... no... ow... sorry, let me go."

Mr Miliband then concluded the interview and a spokesman later issued a statement on his behalf.

"Mr Miliband is unable to answer further questions and considers the matter to be water under the board." *(Surely 'bridge'? Ed.)*



Daily Mail, Friday, February 20, 2009

Investigation

Is Reading The Daily Mail As Harmful As Taking Ecstasy?

by MELANIE PHILIPS

EVIDENCE has shown that The Daily Mail and columns written by people like me can have a powerful negative effect on people, which can cause irrational behaviour, irritability, depression, aggression and general intolerance. Long term use could even lead to brain damage.

We need a new approach to what society traditionally tolerates but does, in fact, have a harmful effect on people *(cont. overleaf)*

The Sydney Morning Herald

BRITAIN 'SLIGHTLY INCONVENIENCED BY WEATHER'

MILLIONS of people across the United Kingdom were today trying to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives, after suffering what one meteorologist described as "quite a lot of snow".

A state of emergency was still in place in many parts of the Midlands, with many people unable to come to terms with the speed and ferocity of the snowballs hurled at them by eleven-year-olds.

One man sobbed, as he described to reporters how the paintwork on his window sill had been tarnished by quite a lot of snow falling on it. Another spoke movingly of being trapped in the pub all afternoon after he'd skived an extra day off work and ***(cont. p. 94)***

New from Boden.

Recession Chic

Dave is wearing

A blue-collar Fairtrade working mans 'Dressing Down' in Depression Black.

Baggy low-waste organic "Chipos" with no upturns.

'Conserves', canvas leisure shoes with eco-friendly green laces and soles made from recycled tyres from banned 4x4s.

Dave's Favourite Place: The front page of the Daily Telegraph

Sam is wearing

A simple all-day shift with a tightened belt.

Boots made from non-toxic sub-prime leather.

Brass necklace borrowed from Smythsons of Bond Street.

Sam likes: Standing by her man

Bafta Frocks Shocks!

IT'S THE BAFTAS AGAIN... and our fashion editor **LIZ SLAGG** gives us her usual round-up of the gowns that made her frown and the frocks that rocked her world!

This blowsy gown is a real dumble-bore! If **Emily** wants to show us the snape of her womanly curves she need to go the whole hog – warts and all!

Miss Watson's slinky number shows a body that just won't quidditch! I bet all the boy wizards will want to Pot-her in this one!

Fancy an Indian? Not in this fussy gown – you wouldn't give it to a slumdog! **Freida** needs a millionaire to buy her a proper outfit.

The 'Millionaire' star shows us some real Tarrant in this stunning fairytale frock! The designer deserves to be serenaded with "Freida jolly good fellow!"

What a SS-exy number, eh readers! This Revolutionary Road outfit will get the men's heads spinning!

I don't want to be Nazi but what a terrible frock! More of a Revolutionary Road Crash, **Kate**!

(That's enough. Ed.)

DIARY

Jeremy Clarkson: Talk about unwanted dandruff! And I'm talking about very chilly dandruff indeed – there's lots of it, all over the bloomin' shop!

You know what I'm talking about. Yes, it's that four-lettered word again: SNOW. I hate it. Could someone please tell me what the point of it is? And why do people bang on about it? The fact is this. Snow isn't cotton wool or sponge or velvet or feathers. And don't let anyone tell you it is. Let's look at the facts, shall we? The fact is that snow is just water that's gone all frozen. And that's a fact.

I'd have all snowmen arrested. I really hate them. Let's face it, they're just morbidly obese perves standing outside naked eyeing up the kiddies with nothing on but a top hat and a carrot sticking out. And any bloke who goes on a toboggan must need his head examining. Me, I really, really hate them. Top speed of 25mph, no reverse gear, dodgy suspension and a total inability to go uphill? I've seen Renault XP5 family saloons that do better than that – and believe me, that's saying something!

Heather Mills McCartney: I'm truly humbled by this weather we've been having recently. I've been devoting myself these past few months to campaigning for snow for the kiddies with all my heart and all my soul but I never expected my efforts would meet with such overwhelming success. Now you mention it, my good friend Barack Obama has already called to congratulate me. Incidentally, it's really a secret, but it was actually me who wrote that lovely song "Frosty the Snowman". And don't tell anyone but the person known as "Father Christmas" is actually me with a beard on and my lawyers will personally sue anyone who says it's not. As I was saying to Gordon Brown yesterday, It makes the festive period very hectic, delivering all those presents to all the children of the world, but believe me, it's worth it when you see the smiles on their little faces, bless them.

Peter Hitchens: The nation that defeated the Armada, Bonaparte, the Kaiser and Hitler is now frightened of a snowflake.

When I was setting off to walk through London last week, there was a bit of snow on the ground. But I wasn't going to let a spot of snow bother me. Britons never ever ever shall be slaves. Everyone else seemed to have gone all "multi-cultural" "bi-sexual" and "diverse", putting on pullovers and hats and coats and wellington-boots. Our once-bold nation – the nation of great heroes like Scott and Shackleton

MY SNOW

– is now running scared of a few snowflakes.

I resolved to show the snow what for. I stripped down to my vest and pants, removed my socks and shoes, and put my best forward: I would walk in a straight line across Hyde Park all the way to my destination, just as brave Captain Scott would have done.

Once I got to the stretch of water known to native Britons as the Serpentine, I noticed that my lily-livered compatriots – doused in the anti-snow Stalinist rhetoric of the TV weathermen bully-boys – were pussy-footing around the outer rim, presumably too cowardly to chance the ice.

Determined to teach them a lesson in ice-walking, I marched straight onto the Serpentine and I kept marching until I was up to my neck. And then I swam like a true Briton, all the while sucking on a Fox's Glacier Mint for added warmth.

I emerged a little wet – yes – and chilly – yes – but proud. And there's nothing a few weeks spent wrapped in good strong British silver-foil won't put right.

But my lasting memory of my weedy fellow countrymen, terrified of a bit of snow. Who needs the Taliban to bring us down? We will do it ourselves.

Lord Stevenson: I am profoundly, extremely and unreservedly sorry for all the snow that has fallen over this country in the past few weeks. I don't know how to apologise enough. I'm just terribly terribly sorry.

PS: Now can I have all my money back please.

PPS: But I said I'm sorry.

Ken Livingstone: I put the blame for all the snow that fell in London last week fairly and squarely on the shoulders of Boris Johnson and I'd be dishonest if I didn't. Let's get this straight: this was not just ordinary, decent snow, of the type that Londoners are used to. I could have coped with that. No: this was a singularly vicious and merciless snow, supremely cold and overwhelmingly white, and lacking in all compassion. What makes me hopping mad is that this Tory snow fell on the poor and the disabled and those from ethnic minorities. At the time of his election, I said, and I quote, "There is no doubt that the new Mayor will inaugurate decline and division." I just feel very sorry that he thought it necessary to ruin everyone's February with recourse to such divisive and ill-thought-out snow. But then, that's the Tories for you.

Germaine Greer: How dare that snow target MY house and MY garden? And take it from me these weren't your usual fluffy, lovey-dovey, common-or-garden snowflakes either. No way. They were great fat overwhelmingly phallo-centric snowflakes, hell-bent in their sullen embittered snowiness on silencing any lone voice that did not greet them with the whoops of joy and Mein Fuhrer-style adoration they had grown to expect from a cowed population. So not for the first time, the snow found out where I live – a potentially criminal act in itself – and swooped down on me with all the venom of a flock of deadly poisonous albino spiders. Believe me, I've complained until I'm blue in the face to the police and the security services – but, whaddyaknow, they haven't had the grace to reply. So don't talk to me about snow. It truly makes my blood boil.

Anatole Kaletesky: I predicted just three weeks ago that we were in for "a prolonged period of glorious sunshine". I based this prediction on a concentrated expert reading of a similar three-week period last summer. On reflection, I suppose I should have made myself clearer by readjusting my initial prediction to make it clear that what I meant was that we were in for "a prolonged period of snow, sleet and ice". I was right in theory, though not, strictly speaking, in practice. But it is not the job of the theorist to get tangled up in the details. Rather, it is his job to look at the broader picture, and, quite frankly, I would be most surprised if, looking further ahead, we did not enjoy a bit of sunshine before the year is over.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

I'M MORE THAN HAPPY TO BE APPEARING ON THE JONATHAN ROSS TV SHOW... I WAS FLATTERED TO BE ASKED...
ESPECIALLY IF IT HELPS EASE HIMSELF BACK INTO THE BRITISH PUBLIC'S HEART ...AFTER ALL THAT NONSENSE...
INDEED.
I WOULDN'T ASK HIM TO COMMENT ON THE MORALISTIC FURORE IF I WERE YOU, SIR..
I WON'T, NO..
I'LL AVOID ALL WORDS LIKE THAT WITH 'R'S IN THEM. DON'T WANT TO UPSET HIM...

Literary Review

Sheer drizzle

The Last Supper: A Summer in Italy
Rachel Cusk
(Faber, £16.99)

Chapter 1.

I am a deeply sensitive person and Bristol, where we live, is an ugly place full of hard-hearted bigots. They find my sensitivity intolerable: my liberal conscience irks them. (Like many sensitive artistic people, I prefer not to squander my precious sensitivity on other people.)

I have decided what we must do. We must all go away, my whole family, we must escape to somewhere warm and cultured, so I can give free rein to my award-winning artistic sensibility (ie write a book about it all and claim the expenses off tax).

Chapter 2.

We decide to go to Italy. That's where people go in novels, at the drop of a hat, to cure their disenchantment and boredom, to satisfy the hunger that gnaws at the very ligaments (this is really how I write) of their souls. Yes, we will go to Italy, but not for ever. Three months should be enough, to get it done. The book I mean. We'll take our children out of school, and sell the house at the top of the market and then off we'll go, leaving the smug burghers of Bristol back home to moan about the economy to their heart's content. My heart, meanwhile, will only be content with Art. And if there's one thing you can't get away from in warm, picturesque, infinitely describable Tuscany, it's art with a capital A.

Chapter 3.

So here we are at last! We stay in a *casa di compagna* not far from Arezzo, and visit the tourist sites, like Lucca and Sansepolcro, Florence and Urbino. When it rains I look out of the window at the castle rising out of the mist across the way. Later we will visit the eccentric folk who live there and gawp inside their castle. They are good for a few pages, as is Jim the Scottish taxi driver and his Italian girlfriend, and the English couple who own a nearby hotel, with whom we play some rather comical games of tennis.

Meanwhile there is the Piero della Francesca trail to follow, and museums and churches to visit. I have been reading Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, and I find it quite invaluable as a source whenever I decide to write about an artist. Cimabue, for example, or Giotto or Raphael or any of them really. You see, for someone like me, simply throbbing with artistic sensitivity, the next best thing to making art is writing about it, and if I'm stuck for something to say (not often, it has to be said!), I can always quote a chunk of Vasari. (And I can pad my book out still further with grainy black and white reproductions of all the pictures I describe. Perfect!)

Chapter 4.

Then there's St Francis of Assisi. What a gift of a subject! A whole chapter's worth, his life story and all the painters who depicted him, with his sad eyes, renouncing the wealth his merchant father bestowed on him, and talking to the birds like a tramp in the park. And then there's yet more copy to be had in describing the pilgrims who visit his tomb in the basilica: how bland they are, how philistine, these religious devotees, gathering in reverential huddles round the relics, and telling us to "shush" whenever we, the artistic sensitive ones, dare to so much as open our mouths to express our joy and wonderment at the lovely paintings of Giotto and Cimabue which unfortunately you can only see by going into this dim churchy place, not like a museum at all, no proper lighting or guidebooks, and filled with stupid pilgrim people wanting to pray and be reverential, it's enough to make a sensitive soul quite sick.

Chapter 5.

Just for a change, I decide to write about food. Italian food. Mmmm! Of course, with its bland simplicity, its mushiness, its primary colours, there is something deeply infantile about Italian food. Perhaps that's why we all like it! And yet the Italians would never dream of writing about it in this gushy pretentious way the English do, drizzling our prose with the adjectival equivalents of olive oil and balsamic vinegar, something I then proceed to do myself even as I deride the fault in others. Then I devote nearly two whole pages to the subject of ice cream. Lick that!

Chapter 6.

Eventually, we decide to leave Tuscany. We take the train down to Naples, and then back up to Rome. And wherever we go we dutifully follow the tourist trail so I can have another moan about the dreadfulness and insensitivity of all those beastly foreigners (especially the English!), whose absence from the Italy I wish to visit would make the place so much more agreeable (though there'd be less to write about). But in the end I have to accept that that is all I am myself, a visitor, we cannot settle here, we have run out of money, and my book is nearly full. It is time to go home.

When they get back to school, my two children will be asked to write an essay on "What We Did On Our Holidays". It sounds like the perfect idea for a book! And yet something tells me I've already written it.

Simon Gray: The Smoking Diaries

Books & Bookmen

■ THE recession is certainly biting in the book trade – a confidential set of figures seen by an *Eye* hack reveals that the prices Waterstone's demands from publishers to feature their books as "choices" in shops has plummeted since 2007.

They are, however, still high enough to ensure that booksellers can still be quids in without actually needing to sell any of the books in question.

Inclusion on the "Paperbacks of the Year" list has dropped from £7,000 two years ago to a mere "£2,600-£6,350" in 2009, while to be an "offer of the week", which in the run-up to Christmas 2007 cost £17,000, is currently a mere snip at £5,000 per title. Want to be Book of the Month? That'll be £4,000, please.

All this comes cheap compared to WH Smith, where to be Book of the Week will set you back £25,000. Authors with less deep-pocketed publishers could instead plead with Smug for a place on the "Chart Wall" in Smith's stores, at a mere £1,500-£4,000 – perhaps pointing out what a bargain this is when compared to the £10,000 required to have a deeply-ironic "Great Price" label attached to their book.

Still, there's always Amazon, the reliable online store which boasts of being "the world's most customer-centric company… we give you a variety of resources to help you make your choice, including customer reviews and personal recommendations." Cost of becoming Deal of the Week, a pleasure enjoyed at time of writing by the latest works of Robert Winston and Paul McKenna? £3,000.

■ WITH budgets cut and literary editors jumpy (three have already got the push: the *Daily Telegraph*'s Sam Leith, the *Independent on Sunday*'s Suzi Feay and the *New Statesman*'s Ian Irvine), books pages are starting to show the strain.

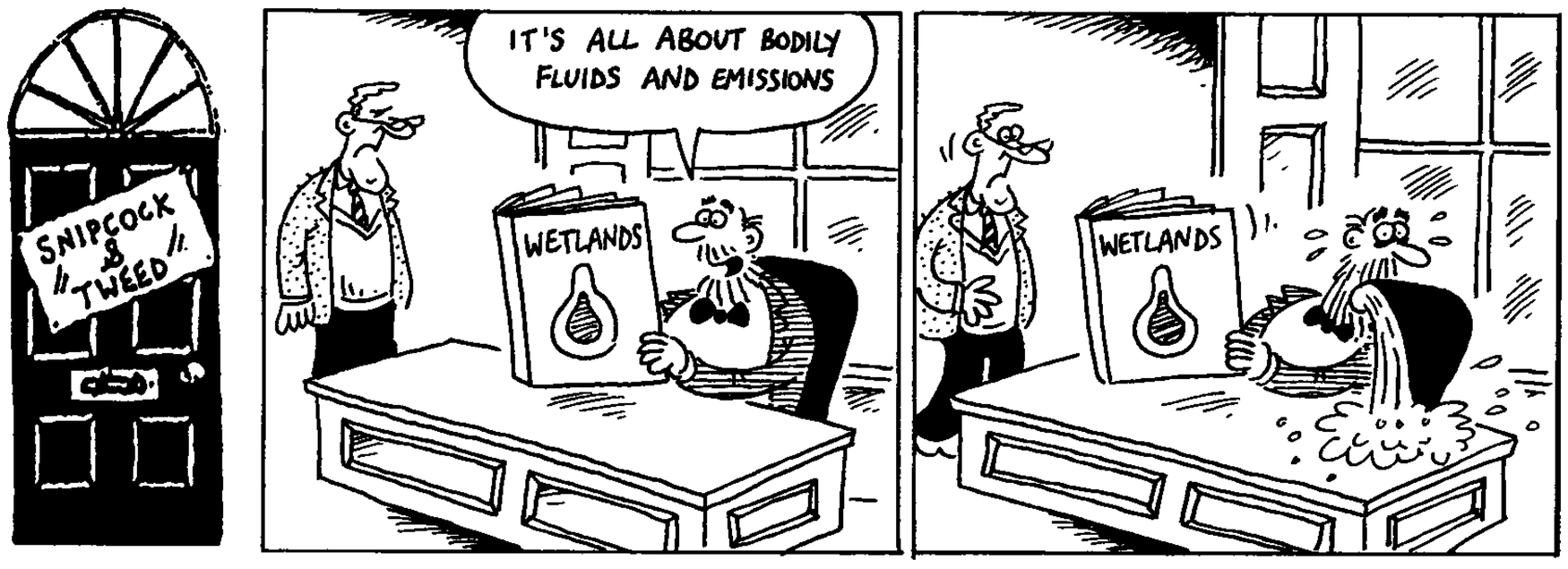
Using outside contributors – whether academic experts or bookish freelances – is increasingly discouraged or too costly, forcing lit eds to opt for under-qualified nearby toilers or the paper's own columnists (Simon Heffer, say, or Dominic Lawson). One result is a grey sameyness, as these blowhards pop up twice as op-ed ranters and reviewers; another is baffling choices, driven by the need to use either staff/contract writers or reliable utility pundits.

The weekend of 14-15 February offered typical examples, with Rod Liddle (real expertise: BBC, Millwall FC, sexual embarrassment) on 19th century US politics in the *Sunday Times*, and Dominic Sandbrook (60s and 70s Britain) on the Iranian revolution in the *Observer*. Top marks, though, to the post-Leith *Telegraph* for inviting in-house sports hack Henry Winter (footballers and their boots) to assess a study of the plot to assassinate Hitler. Things can only get stranger.

■ TALKING of which Sally Ann Lasson has read a book. "It is an extremely heavy book," she confides. In case we don't believe her, we are treated to a large picture of Lasson reclining in an armchair in fetching tracky bottoms and bed-socks holding the tome in question.

So far, so blogtastic. But Lasson's thoughts on *The Snowball*, the official biography of financier Warren Buffett appear not just online alongside details of what she had for breakfast and the antics of

Bookworm continues overleaf ➡



her cats, but over no fewer than five pages – including the cover of the features section – of the *Independent*. Could this have anything to do with the fact that Lasson is married to the paper's managing director, Simon Kelner? Surely not!

■ WHEN Jeff Bezos, Amazon's eccentric boss, launched a new version of his e-book reader the Kindle in Manhattan's plush Morgan Library last week, he was accompanied by a surprise fellow-salesman – Stephen King.

The horror-monger dutifully averred that books and digital technology are "not in conflict – it's like chocolate and peanut butter, when you put them together, you get a whole new taste treat"; and read part of a story initially available only via Kindle, a dull, 50s advert-like effort in which a teacher stuffily wedded to printed books argues with a more enlightened pupil. When writers and commerce mix – as earlier with Fay Weldon's sponsored novel, *The Bulgari Connection*

UPDATED CLASSICS

"It was the worst of times..."

An Abridged 'Tale Of Two Cities'

– the whole new "taste treat" tends to be pretty unpleasant.

As for Bezos, he sees himself as the saviour of "long-form reading", which is "losing ground to short-form". For him the Kindle – expected to arrive eventually in Europe, but not yet available – is a "gateway drug" that will hook its owners on reading and so lead them to devour trad books too. This argument might carry more conviction if voiced by somebody else. Asked in a recent questionnaire to name his three favourite books, Bezos could only come up with two (*The Remains of the Day* and a business title) and dispiritingly picked a film DVD instead of a third.

■ THE troubled tenure of Laura "Fubsie" Macy as "editor-in-chief" of Grove Dictionaries of Music (*Eyes passim*) has finally drawn to its overdue but inevitable close.

She was "terminated" this month by Oxford University Press hitman Casper Grathwohl, ostensibly because the Grove operation is relocating to New York. But the Notorious Fub is a US citizen. More likely the Press lost patience with her performance at the notoriously error-ridden dictionary.

The last straw seems to have been in November, when she treated the annual American Musicological Society conference to a paper called "Keeping Grove Music Online Up-to-date: How You Can Help", apparently yet another plea for unpaid contributions. True the OUP is a registered charity, but this is ridiculous.

'Bookworm'

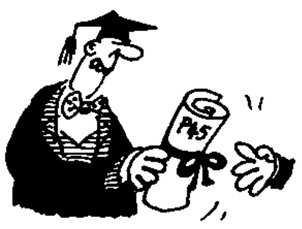
LIBRARY NEWS

■ AS Wirral council confirmed the closure of 11 libraries last week, residents in Bromborough chalked up a victory as their local branch was spared after a concerted campaign.

Instead, the council will shut nearby Eastham library, where there was little protest – perhaps because there was no actual proposal to close it down. In fact it wasn't even mentioned in the original report on closures. So much for consultation!

Wirral council's plans to close more than half the area's public libraries to save £3.7m a year (*Eye* 1225) have been widely condemned. Librarians' organisation CILIP and numerous authors have called on culture secretary Andy Burnham to intervene. They have been told he will "watch closely" what is happening in Wirral – which will obviously make all the difference.

HIGH PRINCIPALS



So Farewell then...

■ LEEDS Metropolitan University bids goodbye to controversial vice-chancellor Simon Lee, but it will still be paying him for a while.

After the initial announcement last month that he would leave in the summer after "six extraordinarily successful years of transformation", speculation ran riot until governors revealed that his departure followed "serious complaints about treatment of staff".

Certainly Lee's management style has often sparked problems (*Eyes passim*), with complaints from the lecturers' union about a bullying culture. In 2006 Lee angrily threatened to fire anyone who skipped the choirs-and-bike-rides "staff development festival", while last year all lecturers were issued with an etiquette guide penned by Lee's wife Patricia, instructing them how to eat properly and wear nice undies.

Meanwhile Lee, who denies mistreating staff, told the *Times Higher Education Supplement* last week that the real reason the governors ousted him was his resistance to raising fees. Having initially announced that Lee would remain in an "ambassadorial" role while Geoff Hitchins took over, the university last week told him that he was no longer required for any formal duties. He will, however, still be paid his £276,000-a-year salary until his agreed departure at the end of August. That won't be much help to Leeds Met's struggling finances.

Wakeham up again

■ A CURIOUS letter arrives from the University of Southampton, where treasurer Alan Walker is unhappy about the *Eye*'s report of vice-chancellor Bill Wakeham's 22 percent salary hike between 2006 and 2008.

"Your comments about the salary increase paid to Southampton's vice-chancellor are confusing and misleading," griped Walker. "A more complete picture would show that Professor Wakeham's pensionable salary increased by 4 percent in 2006 and 3 percent in 2007."

But surely the most "complete picture" is that given in the university's annual report – which is the only public record of the VC's pay and which states that his emoluments (including his bonuses) in 2006 were £196,000, in 2007 were £214,000 and in 2008 were £240,000? The *Eye* makes that a cool 22.4 percent rise (and thus hardly the kind of pay restraint Prof Wakeham was recommending to lecturers earning around a fifth as much).

Walker's grumble doesn't stop there. "I and my fellow members of the University Council have seen fit to reward the Vice-Chancellor's performance with what the commercial world would regard as modest bonuses... In the FTSE-100 company for which I worked for 24 years before retirement, the chief executive received total remuneration of £2,576,000 in 2008."

Indeed he did, although 2009 is going rather less well for Philip Yea, the boss of 3i, the private equity firm where Walker used to work. Yea abruptly stepped down on 28 January, as 3i revealed that its investments had fallen by a fifth. As the commercial world starts to wonder whether those big bonuses were deserved, maybe it's time for universities to do the same with VCs' pay?

Crystal balls

■ AN AUDIT of so-called science courses at the University of Westminster concluded that the science content of degrees in complementary health should be boosted – but sceptics suspect that applying real science to such subjects would be confusing for students.

A letter from university chief Professor Geoff Petts to staff last month revealed that the audit (by Professor Alan Jago, the former dean of, er, architecture) concluded that it was important to deliver on the promise of "science-based training" and that students should have to pass core health sciences modules in order to "make more explicit the 'scientific' nature" of the courses. Prof Petts said the improvements would put the courses "in an extremely strong position to meet the external challenges of the future".

At least he used scare quotes on the word scientific, because these courses really aren't science. Slides from a Westminster undergraduate lecture on vibrational medicine, obtained by David Colquhoun, a pharmacology professor at UCL and a science blogger, revealed that students are taught such gems as "[amethyst] emits high yin energy so transmuting lower energies and clearing and aligning energy disturbances at all levels of being".

Salford University recently dropped complementary health courses, saying they were not a "sound academic fit". The University of Central Lancashire is reviewing its courses in complementary and alternative medicine, including its MSc courses in acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine (see *Eye* 1217).

Case Notes Cat in de H.

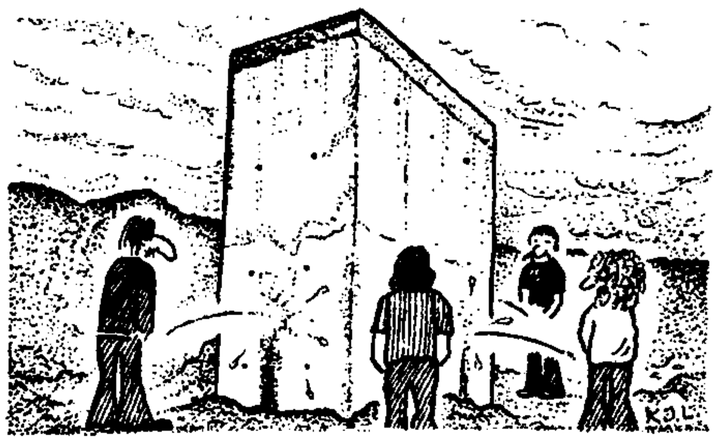
When **Cat in the H.** arrived at the clinic he was underweight and naked apart from formal headwear and a bow tie. The patient was highly verbose and agitated. In this manic state he has sought the company of children. It is probable that his own kittenhood was so appalling that he seeks to re-enact it but this time fearlessly and making it fun. His frantic rhyming would indicate 'clang association'; in this condition the chain of thought is directed by the sound rather than the meaning of the words. It is usually symptomatic of schizophrenia. **Cat in the H.** required heavy sedation at bedtime

Literary Psychologist

Pseuds Corner

This is actually a great opportunity for us. It's rather nice not to be dictated to by fashion and retail any more. I picked up a Louis Vuitton scarf yesterday as I left the house, remembered it was from last year's collection, and thought how blissful it was that it just didn't matter any more.

Retail expert MARY PORTAS on the 'New Modesty', *Daily Telegraph*



With such an incredible cast of teachers, Ealing really was effective preparation for the 20th century and spurred me on to produce the installation and manifesto that became The Who.

PETE TOWNSHEND remembers his time at Ealing Technical College, *The Times*

A producer friend of mine, Adam Kenwright, gave me a bespoke Monopoly set where every property is named after one of my shows. Park Lane is *The Seagull*, Bond Street is *Boeing-Boeing*. The railway stations are production companies I have worked for. Playing it is a big ego boost.

Theatre producer SONIA FRIEDMAN, *Telegraph Magazine*

Many in the film have fond memories of Vicious. Viviane Albertine, who shared a flat with him before his Sex Pistols days said: "Sid was really clever. He had a great brain. The way he wore Nazi insignia and swastikas was to completely dilute the meaning of them, but people never got that about him. He was clever. He understood concepts."

***Guardian* report on new documentary about Sid Vicious**

Sometimes the world is simply ripe for innovation. Just as Newton and Leibniz happened upon calculus independently and roughly simultaneously, so, on opposite sides of Europe, Rinus Michels and Valeriy Lobanovskyi each came to the same realisation of how football should be played.

From JONATHAN WILSON, *Inverting the Pyramid: A History of Football Tactics*

[Adrian Fisher and Luna Montenegro] will present AURORA, a live performance inspired by the illumined alchemical manuscript of the 15th century "Aurora Consurgens". In the original illustration, two men are seen sucking the breast milk of a woman.

In the performance, a woman is seated on a chair while a man attempts to suck milk from her breast. There is no milk. The possibility of feeding, of nourishment, is frozen. The continuity of life is held at a still point, it forms a still life, one in which the propagation of the mother, as mother earth, is stopped. It represents the end point of capitalism where the flow of money, liquidity, is frozen. The man is left sucking, attempting to continue the actions that brought the flow of capital, but they are empty. The action remains as a ritual, a meditation on what is missing.

Art project 'New Still Lives', shown at the London Art Fair

CONTRIBUTORS: APR, Andrea Wordsworth, Mark Solon, Mick Gold, Richard Wilson, Cliff Pearcey.

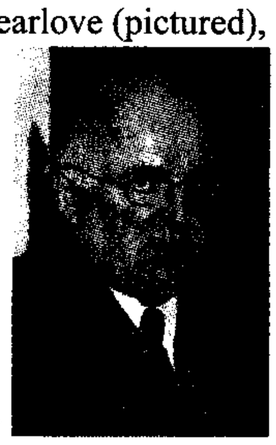
IN THE BACK

WMDs

Eye Ssh...py

THE issue of British intelligence agent Michael Shipster's pre-war mission to Iraq has finally been raised in parliament, a mere six months after Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ron Suskind's revelation about Britain receiving high-level intelligence that Iraq did not have WMD.

Suskind says Sir Richard Dearlove (pictured), former head of MI6, and Nigel Inkster, former deputy head, both confirmed directly to him that MI6 man Shipster went on an extraordinary mission to the Middle East in January 2003. Shipster held talks with Tahir Jalil Habbush, head of Iraqi intelligence, who was in fact acting as a source for British intelligence. Habbush was later handed over to US intelligence as a source and, even though he was named as one of the "most wanted" top Baathist officials, he has never consequently been arrested.



Habbush told Shipster that Iraq did not have WMD, a message that MI6 boss Dearlove took straight to the CIA, where it was ignored. Dearlove and Inkster have not issued any denial of Suskind's on-the-record reports of their discussions of the Shipster mission, but until Lynne Jones MP raised the issue during a debate with foreign secretary David Miliband last week, parliament has shown no interest in the matter.

The intelligence and security committee, or the foreign affairs committee, could quite easily call Dearlove, Inkster and Shipster to discuss this issue, but so far interest in Suskind's revelations have not spread beyond Jones. The *Eye* contacted Inkster and Shipster, but they declined to comment. Downing Street said it would "neither confirm nor deny" details of the Shipster talks. So even though people can go into a bookshop, shell out £14 and read Suskind's detailed description of the Shipster-Habbush discussions based on interviews with the former head and deputy head of MI6, the government will not discuss them lest they jeopardise "national security".

IRAQ & AFGHANISTAN

Transport of no delight

THE pisspoor state of the RAF's air transport aircraft has long been a major complaint for service personnel deployed on ops in Afghanistan or Iraq.

The RAF has only nine Tristar transport aircraft in its inventory, six of them modified for air-to-air refuelling. The other three, bought from Pan Am back in 1980, are old, maintenance-heavy and can shift only 266 chaps and kit at a time. In fact the ancient Tristars of 216 Squadron are grounded so often they have been nicknamed the "Brize Norton Static Display Team" by irate squaddies.

The MoD is thus forced to lease aircraft from other airlines to "fill the gaps", usually choosing the lowest bidder, with varying degrees of success. Air Slovakia, for example, once delayed the departure of its own flight and 180 troops because the crew couldn't be bothered to turn up in time to prepare their own aircraft. Another flight from a Ukrainian contractor was delayed while the flight crew stocked up on vodka from the local Co-op.

It's not just the aircraft and their crews that suffer from "overstretch". Brize Norton itself can't cope with the traffic. In recent months the station commander has refused to handle more of these charter flights, complaining that the ground staff or "crabs" (aircraft loaders) can no longer handle the 24-hour shifts required to keep the airlift from collapsing.

The MoD has had to arrange flights out of regional civilian airports instead, incurring huge extra costs. In civil airports, health and safety rules demand that baggage handlers are not obliged to lift bags of more than 22kg. The average Bergen (rucksack) on its way out to Kandahar weighs in at more than 50kg.

Frequent flyers to the Sandpit point to another problem: the return flights. These are regularly delayed by 36 to 48 hours due to mechanical failures, duff communications and exploding tyres, so those coming back to the UK for some precious leave often find that 25 percent of their time off is spent on the ground at airports.

'Squarebasher'

DEFENCE TRAINING

Officers' mess?

SO desperate is the government to cling to its £12bn PFI scheme to privatise defence training (*Eyes passim*), involving the construction of a huge new "defence academy" in South Wales, it has happily replaced the building company with... a caterer!

The deal was originally lined up with Metrix, a consortium owned 50/50 by technology company Qinetiq and property developer Land Securities. On this dream ticket "Metrix achieved the highest technical score" and was named "preferred bidder".

When Land Securities withdrew in December because of delays and cost overruns, the Ministry of Defence scrambled around desperately for a replacement. As the deal requires the owners to stump up hundreds of millions in hard to come by capital, only one firm came forward: French caterer Sodexo. The MoD bit its hand off without apparently considering whether this affected the "highest technical" qualities it was once so keen on.

The defence training project was intended, in the words of former defence minister Derek Twigg, to "focus on how best to improve our accommodation and training facilities, and meet our commitments following the review by Nicholas Blake QC [into the deaths of five trainees at Deepcut – *Eyes passim*] to improve the support, welfare and wellbeing of our trainees". Which makes Sodexo an odd choice. In 2006 Harmondsworth immigration centre, run by Sodexo subsidiary Kalyx, was condemned by prisons inspector Anne Owers for "failing to provide a safe and stable environment".

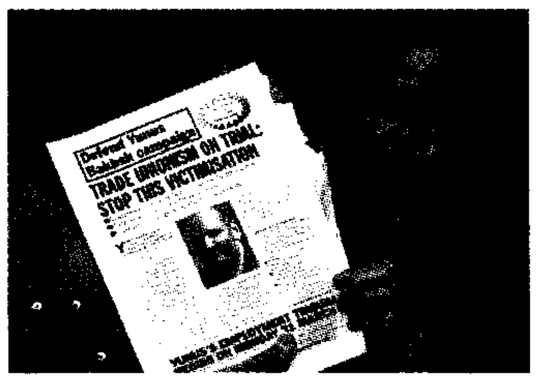
☛ *See over...*

RACISM AT WORK

The hounding of Nurse Yunus Bakhsh

WHEN psychiatric nurse Yunus Bakhsh was sacked by his health trust and expelled from Unison, there was delight on the white supremacist website, Stormfront. "Revenge is sweet. Well done to those involved," said one contributor. "Payback time. Bye Bye Yunis. Job Done," said another above a vile racist rhyme.

Idle boasts? Perhaps; but back in October 2005 someone on the website was seeking "some real and substantiated dirt on this nasty piece of immigrant stock". (They blamed Mr Bakhsh, an anti-racist campaigner, for a BNP member losing his job.)



Yunus Bakhsh

The following year 48-year-old Mr Bakhsh – a staff nurse without a stain on his 23-year career – was suspended without warning from his job at Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Trust. It had received anonymous allegations against him of bullying and harassment. Although Mr Bakhsh claimed that racism was behind the allegations, he was never able to argue that case or indeed to challenge witnesses at his disciplinary hearing. It went ahead in his absence, even though a doctor had certified he was suffering from stress. In June last year he was sacked.

Mr Bakhsh had been one of Unison northern region's leading activists and might have expected his union's support. But the same allegations from his fellow trade unionists had also been made to Unison. He was summarily suspended, his union office was sealed and all his records and equipment confiscated. Later he was to face union "charges" relating to expenses, phone calls and misuse of the computer for political activities – not, curiously, the bullying or harassment which had lost him his job. Mr Bakhsh maintains that not only did he give a full explanation of all the irregularities put to him (for example, Socialist Workers' Party leaflets found on the computer could have been put there by another union official who belonged to the party) but these were ignored.

Further, he was denied the chance to prove his "innocence" because the union still hold all his records. But again his disciplinary hearing went ahead while he was too unwell to defend himself and in November last year he was booted out of the union he had served for many years.

In 2006, by a process of elimination, Bakhsh believed he had identified two of those behind the anonymous allegations. He filed complaints alleging racism and asked his trade union to investigate. He named two colleagues: Kerry Cafferty and her husband, Peter. His protests got nowhere.

But then, shortly before Christmas, a friend introduced him to Facebook. In an idle moment he went on to the page of Kerry Cafferty who, with her husband, was among a small group who had given evidence against him. He found she had Facebook "friends" who were open members of the British National Party or Nazi groups, and she had herself joined several Facebook "causes" including: "England is our country, Our rules, don't like it fuck off!!!"; "NO MORE! Asylum seekers in Britain"; "Oi! This is England"; and "Make Great Britain British Again". She was pictured with her husband, Peter Cafferty, Unison chair of health, regional auditor and Labour link officer, whom Bakhsh had also accused. Among the more revolting face book "friends" is a Hitler-saluting, black-masked thug.

Bakhsh immediately wrote in protest to Unison's general secretary, Dave Prentis. But then he also managed to gain access to the Stormfront website where he learned the extent of apparent far-right involvement in the union – and its unhealthy interest in Yunus Bakhsh.

Dialogue on the site boasts about having more than one mole in Unison's northern region: "So now we have quite a few little dickie birds so to speak. And the little twigs that they are bringing are very useful indeed. Bye Bye yurinates I hope they stop your dole money too" (*sic*).

Those "dickie birds" may explain why those exchanging information on the website, like Bob Blatchford, "Native Brit", and "Albio" appeared to be aware of details about Bakhsh's troubles, both at work and with his union, long before he did himself.

The *Eye* asked Peter Cafferty about his wife's Facebook membership of right-wing groups, his appearance on her page and the allegations that had been levelled at Mr Bakshs. At first he replied "No comment" to every question and then "not true".

The health trust, which employs Kerry Cafferty, was hardly more forthcoming. "It is trust policy not to openly discuss confidential matters relating to our individual employees. With regards to Mr Bakhsh, his dismissal is subject to appeal and we are going through due process."

Unison told the *Eye* that it had upheld Mr Bakhsh's complaint about Kerry Cafferty's Facebook membership of racist groups, but that she had resigned from the union before formal action could be take. However, it could find no evidence to suggest that her husband had joined the groups. It had also instigated an inquiry into the leaking of information to Stormfront members, but added that as neither of the Caffertys participated in the disciplinary hearing against Mr Bakhsh, there was no reason to review the union's decision to expel him.

Nevertheless they were certainly among those who originally complained about him and appear on a list of witnesses. It took Mr Bakhsh 18 months to even discover the seriousness of the claims made against him – that he was suspected of a campaign of intimidation, making anonymous phone calls, window breakages and break-ins. None of this was ever reported to the police or, it seems, supported by any evidence, including the union's search of Bakhsh's phone records. For Mr Bakhsh, who *has* been on the receiving end of death threats from the violent Nazi group Combat 18, had his house daubed with racist graffiti and had bricks thrown through his window while he, his partner and two year-old child were watching TV, they were outrageous claims.

There is huge support for Mr Bakhsh within his union and profession, and growing demands for his immediate reinstatement pending a full inquiry into the affair. So far the union has failed to act, but it may be forced to reconsider when it receives a writ from Mr Bakhsh's lawyer alleging race discrimination and victimisation against a number of named union members and officials including the Caffertys.

CDC

Killer stats

NOBODY expects doing business in developing countries to be without difficulties, but statistics unearthed by *Private Eye* for fatalities at businesses run by Britain's publicly-owned international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, paint an alarming picture which CDC is desperate to cover up.

In the seven years to 2002, there were 49 deaths, an average seven a year, reported at the businesses in which CDC invested across industries such as agriculture, mining and infrastructure.

In 2003 the figure reached 13, including an incident at a farm run by Zambian company Mpongwe, since sold, in which CDC papers reveal darkly: "A poacher supposedly fell whilst being pursued by Mpongwe security and received fatal injuries." In another tragedy that year, at a gas processing plant being constructed on Songo Songo island off Tanzania by CDC subsidiary Songas Ltd, "two contractors drowned after using the local dhow to get to Songo island to commence work". This same firm, *Eye* 1225 revealed, makes $25m a year tax-free profits but doesn't seem to have been able to afford safe transport for its workers.

In March 2004 CDC's "fatal accidents and injuries report", seen by the *Eye*, concluded that: "It is clear from the investigations into the 2003 fatalities that there were many instances where management could have done more." A vigorous safety campaign was promised.

Did it work? Figures aren't available for 2004; but in 2005, by which time CDC had been reconstituted as a private equity business, deaths at firms managed by CDC's main fund manager Actis almost doubled to 25. Latest figures are more worrying still. Reported fatalities for 2007 and 2008 (not broken down) totalled 59. As this was only those reported by 9 January this year, and reporting from CDC's many fund managers is patchy, it is likely to understate the total.

CDC commented: "These include six road accident deaths involving investee company vehicles, 25 deaths resulting from the general public's interaction with assets of the companies – for example illegal tapping of electricity lines – and 19 work related incidents. The remaining deaths are security related and include murders on investee company property."

CDC maintains that the rise "reflects the much greater number of companies that we have in our portfolio (over 600 compared to around 400 at the end of the 1990s), the increased number of people they employ (almost a million) and the nature of some of the businesses that have become a part of our portfolio in recent years – businesses that have had historically high fatality rates…"

But CDC refuses to release the fatality reports it receives from its fund managers, which might reveal whether there are still "many instances where management could have done more". It won't even give a breakdown to show at which companies the deaths occurred; nor, incredibly, explain why not. "Having undertaken lengthy consultations with relevant third parties," opines CDC's lawyer Mark Kenderdine-Davies, "I have concluded that CDC is not required to state why the exemptions apply, or why the public interest is in favour of non-disclosure, as I consider that this information would itself be exempt information."

PS: When CDC recently commissioned a report on the "development impact" of its power companies, grouped together as Globeleq, the scores of deaths merited not a mention in the glossy pamphlet – even though a draft obtained by the *Eye* stated there were 45 in Uganda alone between 2005 and 2007.

GLOBELEQ

PPS: The Globeleq report was billed as an "independent" assessment by consultants Arthur D Little. Papers obtained by the *Eye* under FoI reveal it was anything but. The glossy brochure was produced following meetings among CDC, the Department for International Development (DfID) and ADL. As CDC chief executive Richard Laing said in one email: "We need to tell a story." A senior DfID official mentioned "a real need in this document for specific stats and for the human touch, killer statistics and killer anecdotes".

AGE CONCERN

Mayday, Heyday

AGE CONCERN England's catastrophic membership organisation Heyday is to close after the charity spent £22m on it and got just £700,000 back. The axe fell following publication of a Charity Commission report this month revealing the full sorry saga.

Age Concern England (ACE) set up Heyday in 2006 to help baby boomers prepare for retirement by offering them products, such as insurance, and a political voice in return for £26 a year. The charity had ambitious plans to recruit 3m members in five years but the figure stalled at around 44,000. The venture was dogged by other disasters, such as an £815,000 pay-off to Tony Page, who was director of the charity's trading arm, Age Concern Enterprises, before the launch (*Eye* 1196). He had warned of flaws in Heyday's management structure and that it could jeopardise the charity's reputation.

Despite his departure, widespread job losses and clear evidence that Heyday was falling far short of its membership target, the trustees kept faith with ACE's director general Gordon Lishman, who had championed the new organisation, and plodded on, throwing good money after bad. But as discontent grew, in 2007 the Charity Commission decided to investigate.

The regulator discovered trustees had no exit strategy, relied on verbal assurances for commercial funding and failed to show proper stewardship. The charity's huge 34-strong board, including members of local Age Concerns, was "too large to facilitate effective decision-making" and the commission questioned whether there was ever enough evidence to justify investing charitable funds in Heyday, which swallowed up £4.6m from ACE and £17.4m from Age Concern Enterprises. Most spending went on wages, a glossy magazine, a website and IT. The commission also questioned whether selling Heyday memberships to companies was compatible with the organisation's charitable purposes.

The inquiry concluded that the decision-making process "lacked the vigour that we expect from a charity embarking on a high-profile new project" and recommended ACE, whose income last year was £79.9m, commission an independent external review into Heyday's management and finances. Sir Christopher Kelly, former chair of children's charity the NSPCC, has been appointed to do this.

It is extremely rare for a large charity to receive such stinging criticism from the commission. However, neither the inquiry nor Sir Christopher's review are likely to serve much purpose: ACE is in the final stages of a merger with Help the Aged, which will lead to the creation of a new charity super-brand for older people and to the demise of Age Concern, which dates back to the Second World War.

Lishman, who defended Heyday throughout, said he took full responsibility for the Heyday failure but wouldn't be resigning. Neither has anyone else. Lishman is due to retire when the merger goes through – on April Fools' Day.

MENTAL HEALTH

Swept away

THE government has made great play in the past year of the need to help disabled people, in particular those with mental-health problems, back into the world of work. But what about those already in the workplace who don't get such support?

Kip Gurney, 53, has worked for more than 30 years as a caretaker on the Holloway estate in Islington, which is owned by the Corporation of London. In 2004 he developed severe depression. After a couple of disputes with one estate family, he began to believe his employers did not support him. In 2006 his health deteriorated sharply; he started to go walkabout on Hampstead Heath, sometimes staying out overnight, to the distress of his family.

Almost all the residents of the estate supported Kip and thought he was an excellent caretaker. They knew that in the 1990s he had rescued a tenant from a house fire, dislocating his shoulder as he dragged the man from the burning building – for which he won a bravery award.

After one period of sick leave, Kip went back on reduced hours but was soon ordered to return to work full-time, before he was ready. After a serious attempt at self-harm he spent time in a local respite centre for people with mental-health issues.

Last summer Kip's doctor, the corporation's own doctor, his psychiatrist and Islington Mind all wrote to the corporation suggesting that he should be retired on medical grounds and helped to swap his council house for one in another local authority area – a fairly routine request – so that he could be nearer to close family members. Both requests were refused.

Kip's employment has now been "terminated" without compensation. He will also lose his house. Had he been retired on medical grounds, he would have been entitled to a lump sum of £48,000 plus £1,500 a month. As it is he must get by until he reaches retirement age on incapacity benefit of £84.50 a week.

Mind's David Leigh says it is "a disgusting case… A great injustice has been done to Mr Gurney and his family". Angela Slocumbe, of the local tenants and residents group, said: "I'm just amazed that they would treat a member of staff in that way… driving someone mad isn't a great way to look after your staff. Kip's the horse who's been carted off, he's been here for so long, he's never done anything wrong, and look what's happened to him."

Martin Donoghue, a partner in city law firm Silverman Sherliker LLP, has assisted Kip in his fight against the corporation *pro bono*. He said: "I am appalled with what has happened to Mr Gurney. He has given so much of his working life to the corporation, he has been a loyal servant, suffered serious illness but is now being punished." Michael Mansfield QC's chambers have now also agreed to act *pro bono* for him.

A spokeswoman for the City of London Corporation told the *Eye*: "We have been as supportive as possible in this case, but unfortunately after a very prolonged period of absence and having exhausted all other options, we have had to take reasonable and appropriate action. We have, however, tried to provide continued support." The head of press, Greg Williams, added: "We brought in a wide range of professional support and we were very engaged on this. It has been very difficult, but we believe that we have done not only what is appropriate, but what is right."

NUMBER CRUNCHING

8% Rise in number of applications to university for 2009 academic year

10% University students who will have their grants slashed in 2009 to recover £200m overspend by Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

CARE RECORDS

Our Way or the highway...

ANDREW WAY, chief executive of Hampstead's Royal Free Hospital, needs to be careful. If he speaks out too freely he will find himself on the receiving end of Labour's latest method of creating the illusion of accountable government: blaming the victim.

Last week Way went wild about the costs of Cerner Millennium's disastrously cumbersome care records service (*Eyes passim*). As much as £10m had been wasted and patients left untreated while staff tried to make the accursed system work, he said. It has "caused our staff so much heartache and hard work".

The Royal Free is not alone. The Barts and London Trust was another guinea pig for the techno-nutters hired by the Department of Health. It, too, was forced to adopt the care records service, with predictable consequences. Staff complained that unlike computer software that actually worked, the geniuses behind the care records had designed a system which did not warn them if they were about to make a mistake. One slip on the dozen or so pages a nurse had to go through to register a new birth, and he or she had to go back to the beginning again.

Lives have been put at risk. Within weeks of the system rolling out, and in breach of government targets, patients with cancer were not being told of urgent appointments to see specialists. The failure to meet the two-week urgent access guarantee to patients with suspected cancer were "directly attributable to the erroneous migration of outpatient clinics [data] at the change-over to [the] Care Records Service", read one minute from last year.

Because doctors, nurses and clerical staff did not understand the system, more than cancer targets were missed. Patients arriving in A&E weren't treated within the recommended four hours either.

As the system sent the sick to clinics which were closed or repeatedly mailed cancellation letters for appointments, the number of complaints from the public doubled. Nothing went right. At the most basic level, the hospital did not know how many patients it was treating, as the computer spewed out inflated numbers.

Given the "errors in some areas, eg maternity, it is very probable that activity in the Care Records Service data warehouse has been overstated in some areas and may create significant underperformance when these errors have been corrected", the trust's non-executive directors warned.

Early in February, Julian Nettel, chief executive of Barts and the London, resigned. Officially he left for "personal reasons", but everyone knew he was succumbing to pressure from the Department of Health and NHS for failing to meet targets.

Whatever failings he may have had, Nettel could not replace the useless system the NHS's National Programme for IT had imposed on his hospital, any more than he could get rid of the Treasury's PFI scheme which is now consuming so much of its budget.

To the public it looked as if a guilty manager was carrying the can, but a senior member of staff learned differently when he met a management consultant socially. The consultant mentioned in passing that she had worked on the care records service. "Didn't you realise it was going to fail?" the man from Barts asked. "Oh, we could see all kinds of problems," the consultant replied. "So why didn't you raise the alarm?" "Ah well, it doesn't do to be negative."

The NHS and DoH have not banned Deloitte's or any of the other management consultants who advised on the project from receiving public money again. Instead, Labour reserves its punishments for near-powerless public-sector officials, who must try to cope with other people's cock-ups, by driving them out of their jobs.

'Ratbiter'

In the City

BOARD STUPID

THE parliamentary show trials of the former HBOS and Royal Bank of Scotland bosses and their (so far) more fortunate rivals ignored a crucial element in the causes of the great banking crisis: the total failure of highly paid non-executive directors and the much touted, supercharged corporate governance system put in place after the last great financial scandal, the collapse of Enron and WorldCom a mere eight years ago.

It is a failure epitomised by the architect of that last revamp of boardroom good practice, designed to make non-executive oversight more effective. Sir Derek Higgs ended up as chairman of Alliance & Leicester, which needed to be rescued last year by Santander because of excessive risky lending.

All too often missing from the naming and shaming are the faceless non-executive directors who happily played the role of Santa's little helpers to profit- and bonus-driven chief executives, thereby becoming the watchdogs who never barked. Three attempts at a code on corporate governance later, bank non-executives have once again proved the truth of the dismissive comment by Lonrho's chief executive, RW "Tiny" Rowland, that they were "as useful as baubles on a Christmas tree".

A banker waving his bonus

"My-way-or-the-highway"-style chief executives such as Sir Fred Goodwin at RBS and the man who wasn't there, Andy Hornby's mentor Sir James Crosby at HBOS, backed all the way by overpaid non-banker chairmen such as Sir Tom McKillop and Lord Stevenson, encouraged excess. The same can be said of Adam Applegarth and Matt Ridley at Northern Rock and is now being said about Lloyds, after the fateful takeover of the stricken HBOS, about Eric "Modest Salary" Daniels and Sir Victor Blank – who was a banker.

But on Planet Bank, such hubris was supposed to be prevented by the ranks of supposedly independent non-execs drawn from the great and good (but not necessarily with banking experience) who had the power and votes to control the boardroom dictators.

Non-executives, in the words of Barclays, were supposed to provide "objective challenge" to management, "challenge" assumptions, beliefs or viewpoints, challenge "rigorously", "stand up and defend their own beliefs" and have a "good understanding" of the business so that they could "properly evaluate" information provided by management. Which is why no doubt in February 2008, after the sub-prime bomb had gone off, and taken Northern Rock with it, Barclays "held a separate session for (Audit) Committee members on accounting for and valuation of derivatives and complex banking instruments". Perhaps such a session would have been better before Barclays made the deals which caused last week's £8bn write-offs on top of all the billions which have gone before.

In return for the duties and responsibilities imposed by the Cadbury, Hampel and Higgs codes, non-execs have become very well paid. Non-executive chairmen such as McKillop, Stevenson and Blank earned £750,000, £821,000 and £661,000 in 2007 respectively. Such fat salaries no doubt encouraged the relentless elevation in non-exec pay for what is part-time work. Salaries over £100,000 a year are common, while Tony Hobson and Sir Ronald Garrick at HBOS and Sir Nigel Rudd at Barclays were paid £200,000 or more. Such salaries are seen as encouraging more loyalty than independence.

Too often the supposed watchdog audit and risk committees were staffed by non-execs with no banking experience. Some did not even have what is termed by the US Sarbanes-Oxley rules, also brought in post-Enron, a recognised "financial expert" or what the corporate governance combined code terms "recent and relevant financial experience". All too often anybody who had been a finance director or was an accountant would do. That said, the Northern Rock board was stuffed with bankers!

So who are the non-executive directors who should join Goodwin, McKillop, Crosby, Hornby and Stevenson in the banking hall of shame?

HBOS

Long-serving non-execs included:

Charles Dunstone, still running Carphone Warehouse. Served from the merger in 2001. No banking experience. Paid in total more than £400,000 up to 2007.

Sir Ronald Garrick, who formerly ran engineers Weir Group. No banking experience. Served from 2001. Paid just over £1m to 2007.

Tony Hobson, formerly finance director at insurers Legal & General. Banking experience. Served from 2001. Paid £1.23m to 2007. Still on the boards of Northern Foods, Esure and Sage Group.

Sir Brian Ivory, who ran Highland Distillers. No banking experience. Served from 2001 to 2007. Paid almost £700,000. Director of Scottish American Investment.

Coline McConville, a management consultant. No banking experience. Served from 2001. Paid more than £500,000.

Kate Nealon, former head of compliance at Standard Chartered but a lawyer, not a banker. Served from 2004. Paid over £400,000. Director of Cable & Wireless.

Only with the arrival of former Bank of America man **John Mack** in May 2007 did HBOS boast a senior experienced banker as a non-executive. By then it was too late.

Whistleblower Paul Moore, head of group regulatory risk, exposed the weaknesses of the HBOS non-exec regime when he tried and failed to question the Crosby way of doing banking. He was fired in 2005. But who investigated his allegations but HBOS's own auditors KPMG – for whom Moore had worked until 2002. KPMG found nothing wrong in a very narrow "independent" investigation for the Fundamentally Supine Authority, which had its own concerns about HBOS's fast expansion. KPMG reported in April 2005. Critics might ask whether it was ever likely to find problems in the risk procedures it should have spotted during its own investigations.

It was no doubt irrelevant that KPMG was aware that in 2005 HBOS would be starting a tender for its audit. In fact the tender was deferred until 2006, when KPMG was retained. The HBOS audit alone was worth more than £7m a year to KPMG in 2004 and 2005; the total fees paid to KPMG in each year exceeded £11m. KPMG continued to earn similar amounts in 2006 and 2007.

Similarly, it is hard to imagine the less than gangbusting FSA taking on HBOS over its and Moore's concerns when Crosby had been appointed a non-executive director of the regulator the previous year, 2004. So it made recommendations but left HBOS otherwise to go its own way, over the cliff.

RBS

The long-serving non-execs supporting Goodwin included:

Colin Buchan, a former investment banker. Served from 2002. Paid more than £500,000 to 2007. Director of Standard Life.

Jim Currie, a former civil servant. No banking experience. Served from 2001. Paid £400,000.

Sir Steve Robson, another former mandarin. Served from 2001. No banking experience. Paid more than £450,000. Director of mining group Xstrata and bankers JP Morgan Cazenove, but more surprisingly the Financial Reporting Council watchdog for bean-counters, which he joined in 2007 as RBS imploded. You could not make that one up!

Bob Scott, who ran insurer Aviva when it was CGNU. No banking experience. Served from 2001. Paid more than £650,000. Chairman of Yell Group.

Peter Sutherland, a former civil servant turned non-exec banker. Served from 2001. Paid more than £400,000. Director of BP and Goldman Sachs International – Goldmans, another banking success story.

NORTHERN ROCK

Fully supporting Applegarth and former journalist **Matt Ridley** as he earned just over £1m from 2000 as first deputy chairman and then chairman were:

Sir Derek Wanless, a former NatWest banker. Paid almost £400,000. Director, Northumbrian Water.

Sir George Russell, a former multi-director with no relevant banking experience. Served from 2000 to 2006. Paid almost £300,000. Director of ITV.

Nichola Pease, a fund manager. Served from 2000. Paid over £300,000.

BRADFORD & BINGLEY

Non-executive chairman **Rod Kent** was a former investment banker. He earned more than £1.1m from 2002 to 2007. The bank was rescued by the taxpayer and Santander after chief executives Christopher Rodrigues and Steve Crawshaw fed the former mutual a diet of sub-prime business. Their fans included:

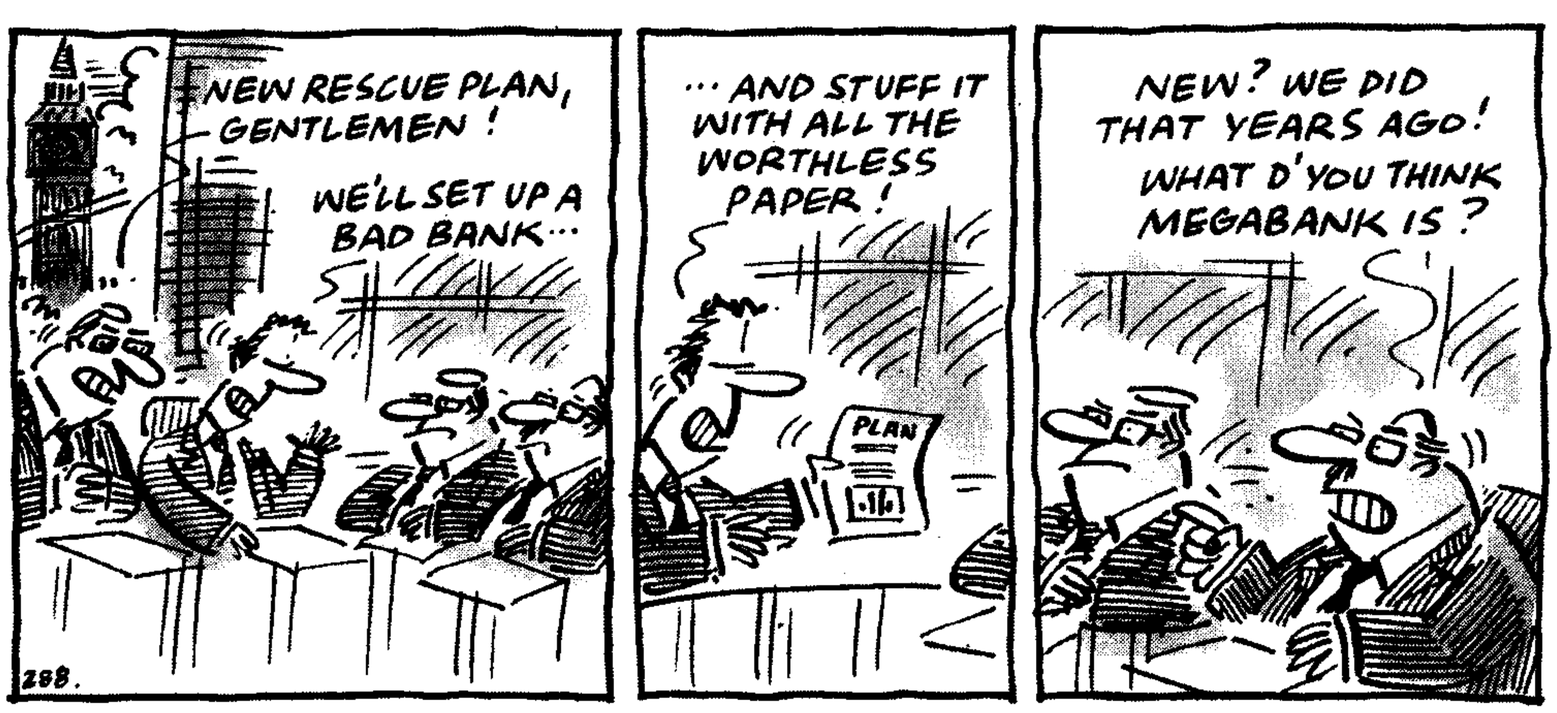
Nicholas Cosh, a former finance director. No relevant banking experience. Served from 2000 and paid some £400,000. Director of ICAP.

Sir George Cox, former director-general of the Institute of Directors. No banking experience. Paid more than £300,000 between 2000 and 2007. Defends bank bonuses.

Louise Patten, banker turned management consultant and wife of former Tory MP Lord John Patten. Appointed 2003. Paid more than £175,000. Director of M&S.

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG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288.
···AND STUFF IT WITH ALL THE WORTHLESS PAPER !
PLAN
NEW? WE DID THAT YEARS AGO! WHAT D'YOU THINK MEGABANK IS ?

ALLIANCE & LEICESTER

Another former mutual that overfed on risky business in a bid to grow fast. **Sir Derek Higgs** took over as chairman in 2005 and earned more than £750,000 by 2007. The bank was run from 2002 to 2007 by chief executive Richard Pym, who left before the crisis. The non-execs included:

Peter Barton, a solicitor turned investment banker. Served from 2000 until 2007 and earned more than £700,000.

Mike Allen, from Procter & Gamble. No banking experience. Served from 2000 to 2006. Paid more than £300,000.

Mike McTighe, from telecoms. No banking experience. Served from 2000. Paid more than £350,000. Director of Pace.

LLOYDS TSB

The role of the non-execs is going to be under intensive scrutiny as Lloyds' share price wilts from the £10bn HBOS losses. The Daniels reign began in 2001:

Ewan Brown, a former investment banker. Director from 2000. Paid more than £700,000 to 2007.

Wolfgang Berndt, from Procter & Gamble. No banking experience. Appointed 2003. Paid more than £300,000 to 2007.

Jan du Plessis, from the tobacco industry. No banking experience. Appointed 2005. Paid over £150,000 to 2007. Also a director of mining firm Rio Tinto, which has just enraged shareholders with its capital injection from Chinalco.

Sir Julian Horn-Smith, who helped run Vodafone. No banking experience. Appointed 2005. Paid £250,000 to 2007.

Lord Leitch, who has experience in financial services but not banking. Appointed 2005. Paid £225,000 to 2007.

Philip Green, who came from United Utilities via Reuters and shipping. No banking experience. Appointed 2007.

BARCLAYS

So far Barclays has avoided disaster, despite heavy losses from over-indulgence in bad banking. Its only non-exec banker, **Robert Steel**, did not join until 2005. The well rewarded current non-execs, as well as **Sir Nigel Rudd** (also on the boards of BAE and BAA), include:

Sir Richard Broadbent, a former civil servant with no banking experience. Appointed 2003. Paid over £500,000 to 2007.

Dame Sandra Dawson, an academic with no banking experience. Appointed 2003. Paid almost £350,000.

Stephen Russell, a former retailer. No banking experience. Appointed 2000. Paid almost £700,000.

Sir Andrew Likierman, former civil servant. No banking experience. Appointed 2004. Paid more than £300,000.

HSBC

The picture here is a little different, with 16 non-execs "controlling" only three execs. But banking experience is slim to none. Instead there is former Cabinet Secretary **Lord Butler**, paid £103,000 in 2007 and £115,000 the previous year, up from a mere £45,000 in 2003. Other non-execs and non-"relevant" bankers earning more than £100,000 were **Sir Brian Moffat, John Coombe, Rona Fairhead** and **Sir Mark Moody-Stuart**. For 2007, the year HSBC started catching a big cold from its move into US sub-prime lending, the non-execs shared £1.3m. Since 2000 that figure has totalled more than £7.5m.

As Steve Tatton, editor of Income Data Services' latest executive compensation review, which showed that non-exec salaries had risen once again last year, told the *FT* this week: "Shareholders have a right to wonder where all this investment of time and money into corporate governance has got them and what steps now need to be taken to get the corporate governance framework to function properly."

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 385

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 27 February 2009

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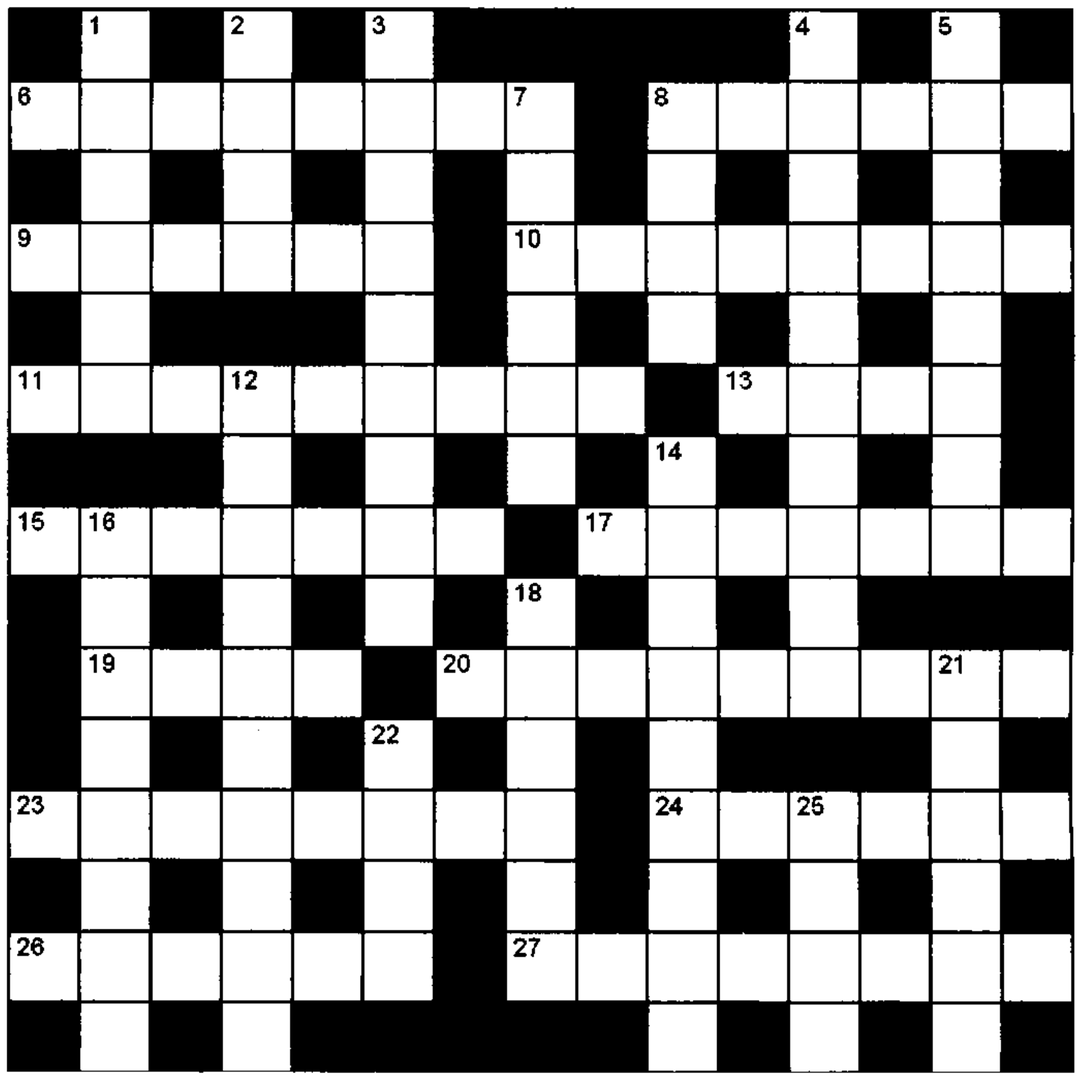

ACROSS

6 Agog audience taking in Barack finally exposed (8)

8 Top royal squeezes butt into skimpy underwear (6)

9 "Go down" gradually, with mechanical assistance? (6)

10 Apt term for fat cat's untaxed earnings? (5,3)

11/15 Clinton "erect, say, for fooling around" is in poor taste (9,2,5)

13 It helps you dry off not fully frontal chicks (4)

15 See 11ac.

17 Penis tip, fairly rough, not broad (7)

19 Unauthorised release taken by peer (4)

20 Wife's abandoned seasonal frilly material? Mingle! (9)

23 "Virgin's leader is very rude contemptible person, without love" – aristocrat (8)

24 Supporting an arse (6)

26 Famous royal keen to grab Brenda's top (6)

27 Hot, large (but short) penile dysfunction? You might need to resort to this (8)

DOWN

1 Entertaining at first, Boris past sell-by date? Sure! (6)

2/25Seat – the source of many a politician's speech? (8)

3 Sex with celebrity's butt in travel broadcast is standard viewing these days (7,2)

4 *Sun* associated with former leader of Conservatives in casual wear – downfall of many a politician (3,7)

5 Sexual moves banks are not so keen on now? (8)

7 Bush's guts upset by "faggot" embracing Republicans' leader – "sickly" (6)

8/22 A thing of the past according to Brown? Roar "Tits!" (4-4)

12 Taking Thatcher's lead, into character assassination, he's out to get rid of pests (3-7)

14 So, ideal location for a new retail park, Brent, e.g. relocated round east end of Ewell? (5,4)

16 Error-prone old politician, caught by slump, takes drug (8)

18 Fanny's weightlifting technique? (6)

21 Nameless old PM's bit of S and M? (6)

22 See 8dn.

25 See 2dn.

Crossword 384 winner: MARGARET WATT

ACROSS: 1 Abacus 5 Waffling 9 Egyptian 10 Oompah 13 Jonathan 16 Muesli 17 Testes 19 Lord Numb 21 Hospitalised 25 Mugabe 26 Nut-brown 27 Shut down 28 Schism.

DOWN: 2 Bag of bones 3 Cop it 4 Spinach 5/11 Wendy Fatladysings 7 Lime green 8 Noah 12 Clamp-downs 14 Astronaut 15 Nil 18 Supremo 20 Relates 23/22 Sarah Tonin 24/6 Hugh Ffonium.

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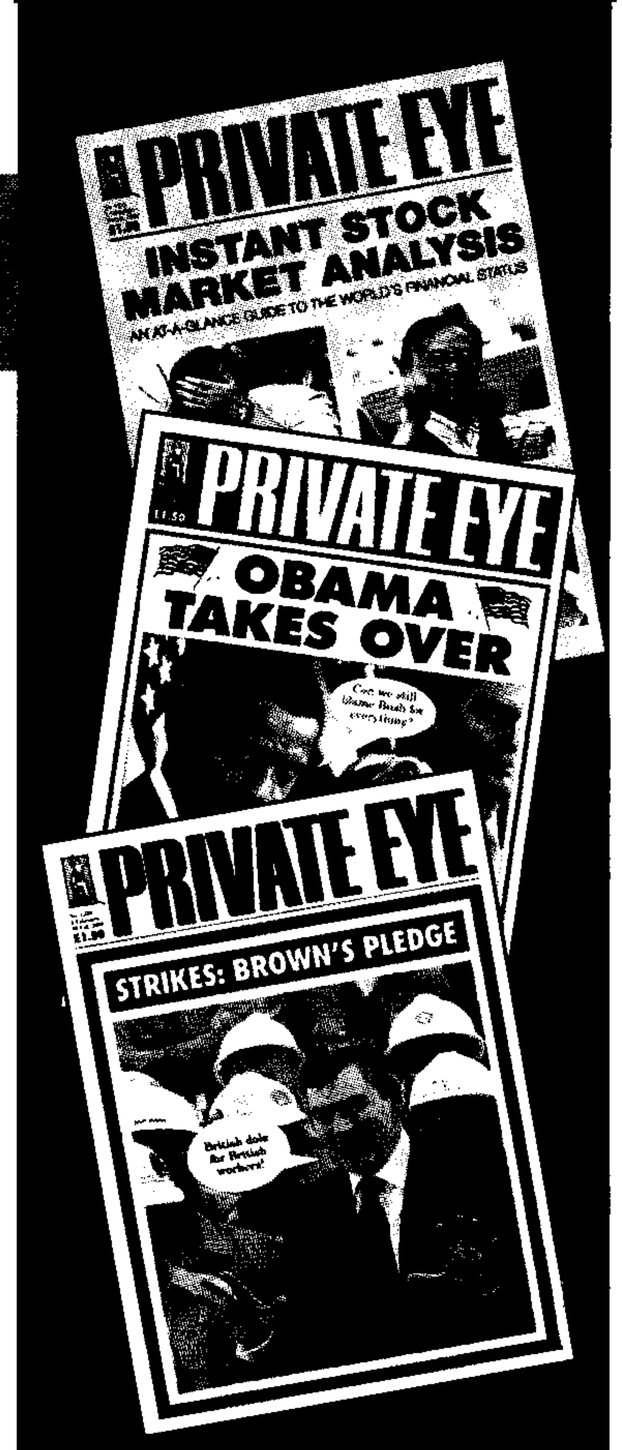
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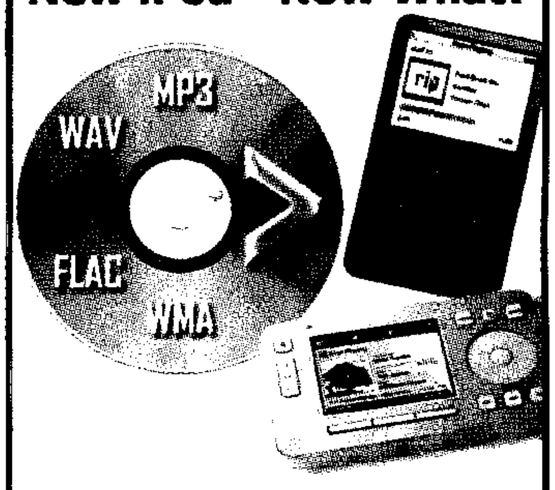

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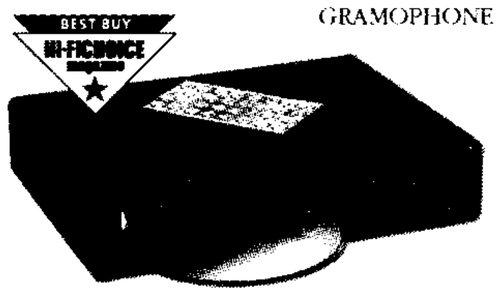

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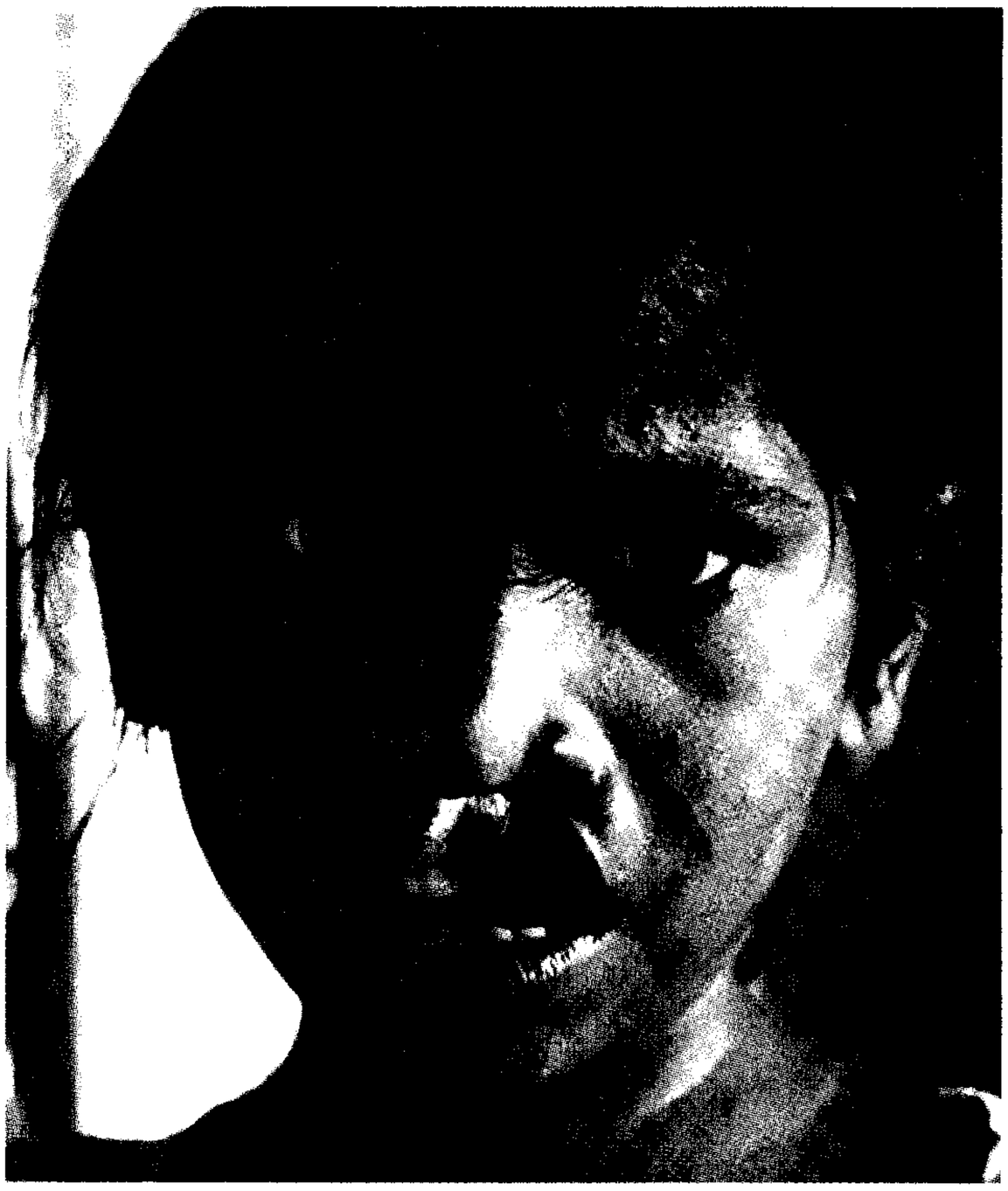

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